



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for
Human Services

March 12, 2020

Dear DSS Directors,

Thank you for being great partners throughout the evolving COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak. This document highlights key actions DHHS has taken to prevent the spread of the virus and provides guidance regarding waiting rooms and lobbies and for social workers conducting home visits. It also provides a summary of additional policy guidance being developed or explored.

This is the first of many updates and we are committed to providing relevant and timely communication.

Key actions DHHS has taken:

1. We have waived the required face to face interview for CIP/LIEAP applications and are allowing a telephone interview for applications. A Dear County Director Letter is being drafted and will be distributed on Friday giving you instructions to implement this immediately.
2. Required contacts for Adult Guardianship cases in facilities are being adjusted. Social Workers may contact the resident and or facility staff by phone to do any monthly or quarterly contacts.
3. Until further notice, required visits for Special Assistance beneficiaries in a Special Care Unit (SCU) are waived. Please ask the facility to email or mail documentation to verify the SCU status of the resident.
4. Until further notice, required home visits for Special Assistance In-Home cases can be waived. Client contact and service coordination can be handled by telephone and DAAS is available for specific case consultation.
5. Until further notice, the Foster Care 18-21 policy prohibiting young adults in foster care from living with removal parents is waived if such young adults are college students who live on college campuses that have been closed due to precautions related to COVID-19. This means that such young adults can continue to receive foster care 18-21 board payments if they return to the home of their parents from whom custody was removed.

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

MAILING ADDRESS: 2401 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2401

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-855-6335 • FAX: 919-334-1018

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Guidance regarding waiting rooms and lobbies:

Our guidance on public spaces, including lobbies and waiting rooms, is located on the NC DHHS COVID-19 website on the tab titled “Businesses and Employers.” The link to our website can be accessed [here](#).

Additional information is available from the CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>.

Guidance for Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services Home Visits:

This recommended protocol for required home visits is provided by the NC Office of Emergency Medical Services. The recommendation includes that each social worker be equipped with:

- Surgical mask/isolation mask
- Gloves
- Hand sanitizer (60% or more alcohol)
- Disposable bags

You may want to reach out to EMS, your Health Department, or Emergency Management for locating supplies.

Recommended home visit procedure:

- Staff maintain 6 feet or more when interacting with all individuals to the extent possible
- Within the first few minutes of the home visit ask if anyone in the home is currently sick, or has been sick within the last 14 days
- If answer affirmatively, gather more information about the individual’s symptoms (fever, cough, etc.), proceed with the visit and take reasonable precautions which include:
 1. Putting on a face mask and gloves
 2. Maintain 6 feet or more, if possible
 3. When the home visit is concluded step outside the home and discard the items in the disposable bag
 4. Dispose of bag
 5. Sanitize hands
- If no, proceed with visit.

Adult Care Homes guidance is being developed:

The Division of Health Service Regulation is working across the Department to develop official guidance for Adult Homes Specialists in County DSS and will share as soon as possible.

Additional Policy Guidance Being Explored:

- DHHS has requested guidance from ACF related to a waiver for face-to-face interview for Work First applications
- DHHS has requested guidance from ACF for use of Skype and FaceTime for foster children monthly visits


- We are exploring auto-extending recertification periods for Work First, FNS, etc. We will issue further guidance on this as soon as possible.

We continue to monitor other state waivers for additional opportunities.

We are united in our mission to protect the health and wellbeing of North Carolinians. County DSS work is vital and this is a time when we are all needed the most and you have all risen to the challenge.

We are also appreciative of your Association Leadership Team who has assisted DHHS by providing invaluable input and suggestions and vetting proposed strategies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan G. Osborne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan G. Osborne
Assistant Secretary for County Operations