

March 16, 2020

RE: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Dear Resource Parent,

In providing guidance to our partners in the community in a highly evolving situation, we are very sensitive to many factors. We all maintain an intense desire to keep children and their adult caregivers, as well as our employees, safe and to restrict the overall spread of the virus.

As the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) situation continues to develop, Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) has been working to put plans in place to ensure Oklahomans are protected. OKDHS is grateful to you for caring for Oklahoma's most vulnerable children and would like to share with you the following guidance regarding COVID-19.

### **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a new virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and which continues to expand. Chinese health officials have reported thousands of infections with COVID-19 in China, with the virus reportedly spreading from person-to-person in many parts of that country. Infections with COVID-19, most of them associated with travel from Wuhan, also are being reported in a growing number of international locations, including the United States.

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

For confirmed COVID-19 infections, reported illnesses have ranged in severity from mild to death. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 after exposure.

### **How do people become infected with COVID-19?**

The exact way the virus is spread is not fully known. With similar coronaviruses (such as MERS and SARS) person-to-person spread is thought to have happened mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other viruses that cause respiratory illness spread. The persons at greatest risk are close contacts of an infected case such as those who are in the same room for a long period of time, such as healthcare personnel or household members.

### **What can I do to prevent the spread of illness?**

- Stay home when you are sick and try to avoid contact with sick people, whenever possible.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then place the used tissue into the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder rather than your hand.
- Avoid touching your face, specifically your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keep your hands clean by washing or sanitizing them often, particularly after coughing or sneezing or being around someone who is sick. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at

least 20 seconds, or about the time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice. Though soap and water are always preferred, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol is also effective in cleaning hands that are not visibly dirty.

- Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces in your home using sanitizing surface wipes or approved cleaners. Follow the directions on the label of the cleaner to ensure safe and effective cleaning.
- Check the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) website (<https://www.cdc.gov/>) before embarking on international travel for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel.
- Follow the CDC and Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) (<https://www.ok.gov/health>) websites and social media for the latest information on COVID-19 and other health-related matters.

You may also contact the COVID-19 Call Center operated by OSDH at 877-215-8336. Call Center Hours are 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday – Friday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday. The Call Center has the capability to connect callers to Spanish speaking interpreters.

### **What should I do if a custody child, myself or someone in my household exhibits symptoms of COVID-19?**

- Contact your local healthcare provider to discuss the symptoms and if in-person evaluation is needed. Do not go to the emergency room unless essential.
- Contact your resource specialist and/or child’s specialist immediately to inform them of the symptoms.

### **Will visits to my home look different at this time?**

Child welfare (CW) staff will call prior to a scheduled visit and ask if any household member has potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, bluish face or lips, persistent pain or pressure in the chest. CW staff will ask if any household member has traveled outside the country in the last month. If yes, ask where and the dates of travel. And if any household member has been exposed to anyone who has been suspected of or diagnosed with COVID-19. CW staff will also screen themselves before coming to your home to visit, by evaluating if they have any potential COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, bluish face or lips, persistent pain or pressure in the chest.

Parent-Child visitation is critical to safe and timely reunification. Parent-Child visitation should continue. CW staff will ask about symptoms. If someone is symptomatic, the face to face parent-child visitation will be rescheduled. A virtual visit may be a substitute at this time.

Family Meetings are critical to team decision making pertaining to safety, permanency and wellbeing. IF anyone is symptomatic, they should not attend a meeting in person. The meeting facilitator or other CW employee should ask attendees if anyone has COVID-19 symptoms. External meetings may be conducted via Zoom or Uber Conference. Further guidance will be provided as necessary.

Thank you for your continued commitment to providing care for OKDHS children. If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact your assigned resource specialist.

Finally, the team at OKDHS wants to thank you for your public service. You are critical to the work that we do to ensure the safety of our state’s children.

We are available to help answer any questions that you have. We will continue to monitor this evolving situation, and we anticipate that we will provide further official guidance over the coming days and weeks. In the meantime, feel free to reach out to your OKDHS caseworker, or as always, feel free to ‘Raise your Hand’ on our [OKDHS.org](http://OKDHS.org) to provide ideas or needs for further assistance.

You may also want to visit [www.okfosters.org](http://www.okfosters.org) for any resource parent updates.

Thank you for your service to our community,

Justin Brown and Dr. Deb Shropshire