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Dear Parents, Providers and Other Stakeholders:

In March, the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) notified families, providers and other stakeholders that in-person family visitation and monthly caseworker contacts with parents, youth and resource parents would be suspended due to COVID-19. This was then extended through the months of April and May 2020 based on guidance from federal and State health officials (US and Maine CDC).

As the State of Maine has begun to implement re-opening plans in a manner that ensures the health and safety of Mainers, OCFS has also been working on a plan to resume in-person contact effective June 8, 2020. Recognizing the importance of parent-child visitation and the challenges presented by video and telephone conferencing, a plan has been developed that balances these factors with the health and safety of all those participating in in-person contacts.

Going forward, in-person parent-child visitation and monthly caseworker contacts will be guided by a strict protocol that includes pre-screening health questions prior to the visit, safety precautions during transportation, sanitizing protocols at visitation centers, conducting visits outside whenever possible, and the requirement that adult visit participants wear a cloth face covering during the contacts. OCFS will provide cloth face coverings for parents, children and resource parents. Children will be encouraged to wear the cloth face covering but are not required to do so. Cloth face coverings will be distributed by district staff. If you have questions about when and how you will receive your mask, please contact your caseworker.

Procedures and requirements for family visitation are outlined in the Visitation Agreement (attached) that parents will be required to review and sign prior to resuming in-person visits with their children. Your cooperation and assistance with these new protocols and procedures will help to ensure the health and safety of children, parents, resource parents, and visit supervisors. Staff will do their best to schedule in-person family visitation and monthly caseworker contacts as quickly as possible beginning June 8, 2020. It will not be possible to accommodate in-person visits for every family in the first few days after in-person contact resumes due to a decreased availability of resources, including visit supervision and transportation. It is likely that over the next few months family visits will consist of a combination of in-person and video/telephone contacts.

Although the requirements for in-person family visits are outlined in the Visitation Agreement, listed below are some of the key points:

- Do not attend in-person visits if you:
 - Have tested positive or were clinically diagnosed with COVID-19;

- Were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 in the last 14 days; or
- Are displaying symptoms of COVID-19.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 include:
 - Cough;
 - Fever;
 - Shortness of breath;
 - Chills;
 - Muscle pain;
 - Headache;
 - Sore throat; and
 - New loss of taste or smell
- Please keep in mind that all adults involved in in-person visitation must wear a cloth face covering. Parents will be provided with a cloth face covering and are responsible for bringing it to every visit. Children over the age of 2 will be provided with a cloth face covering and should be encouraged but are not required to wear it.
 - We recognize that the requirement to use cloth face coverings during the visit may present challenges, particularly with younger children who do not understand the purpose of the face covering. Attached is guidance for parents and resource parents on how to prepare young children to visit with parents who are wearing a cloth face covering.
- During the visit please help to ensure your health and safety and the health and safety of others by:
 - Monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19;
 - Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer as outlined in the Visitation Agreement;
 - Encouraging children to wash their hands frequently; and
 - Sanitizing toys brought to the visit at the beginning of the visit

OCFS encourages parents and resource parents to continue regular video and telephone contact in addition to in-person family visits. It has allowed parents and children to have more frequent contact, which many have found beneficial.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as OCFS has responded to the changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic in our state. It is critical that all participants adhere to the guidelines outlined in this letter, as well as those in the Visitation Agreement. OCFS is committed to providing services in a manner that ensures the health and safety of parents, children, resource parents, and staff. Please contact your caseworker if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Bobbi L. Johnson, LMSW
 Associate Director of Child Welfare Services
 DHHS- Office of Child and Family Services