

**Office of Families and Children**  
**Webinar**  
**April 15, 2020**  
***PCSA and IV-E Courts (10:30 am – 11:00 am)***  
***Private Agencies (12:00 pm – 12:30 pm)***

## **Webinar Overview**

On behalf of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Office of Families and Children, we would like to convey our sincerest thank you to all who were able to participate in our inaugural bi-weekly agency call and we want to thank you for all that you do every day! We appreciate your patience during these unprecedented times.

The purpose of the calls is to provide updates and allow questions during this uncertain time. Because there is a large number on the webinar, we ask that you address questions in the question box and we will address as many as possible at the end. A summary of the webinar and all questions and answers will be sent following the webinar.

### **Jeffery Van Deusen was introduced as the new Assistant Deputy Director in OFC.**

- Bureau of Systems and Practice Advancement: Gina Speaks-Eshler, Bureau Chief
- Bureau of Child/Adult Protective Services: Christine Dobrovich, Bureau Chief
- Bureau of Foster Care Licensing: Colleen Tucker, Bureau Chief

### **Lakeisha Hilton will continue in her role as the Assistant Deputy Director in OFC.**

- Bureau of Automated Services: Cathy Ghering, Bureau Chief
- Bureau of OFC Fiscal Operation: Alicia Allen, Bureau Chief
- Bureau of Multi-Systems Support: Susan Williams, Bureau Chief
- Bureau of Special Projects: Angela Hughes-Rosacrans, Bureau Chief

### **Coronavirus and Children Services - Website information**

ODJFS has created a resource page where you can access information, procedure letters, and questions and answers related to COVID-19.

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/covid19local/>

Agency FAQs:

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocomm/pdf/JFS-Coronavirus-QA-Local.pdf>

OFC page also has a COVID-19 button, which also lists Help Desk email and phone

<http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/CoronavirusAndChildServices/>

### **Visitation Clarification**

- There have been many questions about visits during the pandemic. Many of those have been answered on the Q and A document on the ODJFS website, but we wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the guidance surrounding visits.

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- Safety is paramount and some decisions should be made on a case by case basis. This isn't new guidance, and as a reminder, our office can help you process your specific situations if requested.
- Decisions and activities should be prioritized based on an assessment and routine re-assessment of safety and risk. This includes consideration for age, vulnerability, and location when making case-specific determinations.
- Priority for monthly visit/contact requirements should be considered for children and adults with open cases.
- It is imperative that caseworkers continue to ensure the safety and well-being of children and this must be balanced against the health and safety of caseworkers, the children they are serving, and all individuals with whom they come into contact.
- The monthly caseworker visit requirement remains in place, but the Practice Considerations Memo sent by Director Hall on March 16 was intended to provide PCSAs with the ability to determine alternative/creative methods of contact with children, adults, and/or foster care providers when the safety and well-being of children have been assessed and are not compromised.
- Alternative forms of contact can be used including Skype, Facetime, and phone calls in circumstances in which face-to-face visits are not possible.
- If the attempts (either in person or alternative form) are not successful and/or safety remains a concern, please consider other means (such as safety child checks) that can be done to assess immediate safety, as you normally would.
- If an agency uses alternative methods of communication under these limited, specified circumstances, caseworkers must conduct communications in accordance with the timeframe established.
- The contact type and reason should be well-documented in the case record (SACWIS).

**Visits During the Reunification Process:**

- If a family is at the point of having unsupervised visits, agencies should still conduct and document case-by-case assessments for any immediate safety and health concerns for the children, the parent(s), and the current caregiver(s) that would justify limiting outside exposure.

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- If there are no known concerns, the unsupervised visits should continue. In order to limit additional people being involved, the caregiver should be encouraged to provide transportation to and from the visit and keep to the Ohio Department of Health's social distancing guidelines.
- Agencies also should re-assess whether some children/youth may be returned to the home, pursuant to normal trial home visit procedures, if the child's safety would not be jeopardized, while the agency works with its court to terminate custody orders.
- Recently there have been many questions regarding safety audits. We ask that you review the ODJFS Q/A, the answers to questions 28, 68, and 69 for additional clarification.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):**

- ODJFS recognizes the need to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for youth, caseworkers, foster parents, licensing staff and residential providers.
- ODJFS staff have provided clarifications allowing the Best Practice and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Allocations to be used for PPE and have been researching ways to provide funds to private agencies to purchase PPE and researching opportunities to access the supplies themselves.
- We will continue exploring all options related to access PPE not only for our partner agencies, but ODJFS staff who are continuing to work in the field.

**COVID-19 Reporting Requirements:**

- It is important that OFC is notified if a child-welfare involved individual tests positive for COVID-19. This allows the department to track positive results, offer guidance and technical assistance, and assist agencies with placement options if youth need to be moved.
- If a youth, staff member, caregiver, or household member tests positive for COVID-19 the following steps should be followed:
  - The custodial PCSA or private agency should contact the OFC Help Desk via email [Help-Desk-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Help-Desk-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov) or telephone 1-866-886-3537, **option 4**. They will then notify the appropriate ODJFS staff so we can provide technical support and guidance.
  - If needed, technical Assistance and/or licensing staff will follow up with the referent and any other appropriate parties to offer guidance on specific circumstances.

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- The Help Desk only needs to know the foster parent's name and recommending agency. Without this information, licensing cannot follow up with the recommending agency to provide technical assistance and ensure they are following the health department's protocols. This information will not be shared outside of those discussions.
- Finally, ODJFS continues to work on guidance and best practice options if a child tests positive for COVID-19 and must be isolated.

**Declining Reports Since COVID-19:**

- There has been a lot of discussion about the concern around the declining number of child abuse and neglect reports. This is significant because we know that schools, health care providers, daycares, and community-based programs are working remotely, and there are now less “eyes and ears” on children in your community.
- OFC compared data for the number of reports from March 1-16 compared to March 17-31 and statewide there has been a 49.70% (almost 50%) decrease.
- We suggest provider agencies reach out to their local PCSAs to help in identifying ways to mitigate concerns that referrals are not being reported (community response and solution)
- Your Technical Assistance Specialist will be reaching out with your specific county data. This may be helpful when speaking with your schools and other community partners reminding them of the importance of staying vigilant and taking every opportunity to keep an eye and ear out for the children with whom they may come into contact.
- Many counties have been running their own data, but we know not every agency has the staff or resources to do so. If this is something that would be helpful on an ongoing basis, please let Gina Speaks-Eshler know at [Gina.Speaks-Eshler@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Gina.Speaks-Eshler@jfs.ohio.gov) and this can be provided.

**Best Practice and Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Funding**

- Best Practice funding may be used for:
  - FFPSA preparation - including the development/evaluation of prevention services and QRTPs;
  - Kinship Supports - establishment or expansion of kinship support programs;

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- Foster Care Recruitment and retention activities -efforts to build caregiver capacity to meet the needs of children with complex needs in family-based settings;
- Workforce supports – staffing costs, incentives and additional supports;
- Training incentives – for completion of training or coaching in topic and competency areas relevant to children services work;
- Data Reporting and administrative support – to review and analyze data reporting to inform local strengths, needs, and priorities;
- Equipment and technology support – training services, surface pros, phones, scanners, mobile broadband, etc.;
- Other non-IV-E allowable expenses – Such as vehicles
- Best Practice Funding for COVID-19
  - Supplies for children services staff still working in the field or for foster home members, such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes, or other equipment needs may be coded to equipment, workforce support, or foster home recruitment/retention.
- Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention may be used for:
  - Hard goods needed for a foster parent to become licensed. Examples: beds, cribs, smoke detectors;
  - Items required for licensure such as criminal record checks or medical exams;
  - Services, supports or goods needed by existing foster parents to maintain a placement;
  - Incentive payments to existing foster parents; and
  - Advertising costs to recruit new foster parents.
- Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention for COVID-19
  - Supplies for foster family home members such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, soap, thermometers, sanitizing wipes or other hard good needs.
- Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) Increase
  - Families First Coronavirus Response Act authorized additional funding to states through an increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP).
  - Ohio’s FMAP is increasing from 63.02% to **69.22%**.
  - Increase is retroactive to **1/1/2020** through the last day of the calendar quarter in which the last day of the emergency period occurs.
  - **1/1/2020** through a yet to be determined date.
  - This increase applies to Title IV-E foster care maintenance reimbursements as well as adoption subsidy payments.
  - Agencies will receive the increased FMAP percentage adjustments for foster care maintenance claims previously submitted for claim dates of January 1, 2020 through

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- present on their May 2020 reimbursement warrant. Claims going forward will use the increased FMAP rate through the designated end date.
- Agencies will receive a one-time payment (with child specific payment details) to reimburse any local shares overpaid for adoption subsidy payments issued for January 1, 2020 to present. Subsidy payments going forward beginning with May 2020 will reflect the increased FMAP rate with decreased state and local shares through the designated end date.
  - The FMAP rate will revert to 63.02% on the first day of the month following the emergency period end.
  - Questions about this may be directed to the OFC help desk via email at:
    - [HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov).

**Ohio Children's Trust Fund (OCTF)- Prevention Campaign**

- The mission of the Ohio Children's Trust Fund is to prevent child abuse and neglect through investing in strong communities, healthy families and safe children.
- Our work focuses on parents, caregivers, and professionals who serve families.
- When the people who surround children have the support and resources they need, then children get the nurturing environments they deserve.
- National Child Abuse Prevention Month 2020 # EverydayOhioHeroes

***2020 April Statewide CA/N Awareness Campaign Overview***

- Continue to raise awareness of the impact that child abuse and neglect has on our most vulnerable citizens-our children.
- OCTF's campaign communicates that we *all* have a role to play in preventing child abuse and neglect.
- Through this campaign, OCTF prompts a call to action that encourages all adults to, *"Be a Hero in the Eyes of a Child-one simple act of encouragement at a time."*

***Child Abuse and Prevention, Protective Factors, and Covid-19:***

- When families are under considerable amounts of stress, it may impact a parent's ability to effectively care for a child.
- By providing strategies for families to strengthen their protective factors we can offer families the resources they need to persevere through challenging times.
  - ❖ Resiliency
  - ❖ Social Connections
  - ❖ Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
  - ❖ Concrete Supports
  - ❖ Social and Emotional Competence of Children

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***Strategies for Families:***

- Calling or video chatting with friends and loved ones can help to maintain vital social connections and supports while remaining physically distanced.
- Incorporating fun activities such as painting, yoga, or dance into the at-home school day can help your child(ren) stay active and reduce parental stress and build resiliency.
- Using everyday tasks as opportunities to learn and increase family connections. For example, having your child(ren) help prepare dinner can be both a math lesson and a fun time for the entire family.

***Talking to Children about Covid-19***

- Remain calm and reassuring
- Provide age-appropriate, honest, accurate information
- Allow children the opportunity to ask questions.
- Model and teach children simple everyday actions to reduce the spread of germs.
- **Source:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/talking-with-children.html>

***Child Abuse Prevention Data:***

- There were over 19,000 confirmed reports of child abuse and neglect in Ohio in calendar year 2019.
- The number of reports of child abuse and neglect in Ohio dropped significantly in the second half of March 2020 compared to the first half of the month.
- This drop seems to correlate with the issuance of school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

***Child Abuse and Neglect Response and Tips for Tele-Providers amidst Covid-19:***

- Ask questions that will help to assess families' stress levels and coping strategies
- Offer tips and strategies for parents to cope with stress, provide linkages to additional resources, and offer non-physical disciplinary strategies if needed.
- If tele-health strategy includes video chatting, practitioner should be mindful of any suspicious injuries, unusual body language, and/or inappropriate or negative parent-child interactions.
- As always, if you suspect child abuse or neglect, report it to your local Public Children Services Agency.
- The statewide hotline for reporting child abuse and neglect is **1-855-OH-CHILD**.
- For contact information and additional resources, please visit us at: [www.OCTF.ohio.gov](http://www.OCTF.ohio.gov)

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## **Questions and Answers**

### **PCSA and IV-E Courts**

1. Are PCSAs required to report identification of positive COVID-19 only if the person had an actual test? Some are assumed positive but aren't tested.

Procedure Letter 348 requires that PCSAs and substitute care providers report to ODJFS (at [HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:HELP-DESK-OCF@jfs.ohio.gov) ) any staff, caregivers, household members and children who have tested positive for COVID-19.

2. A residential facility recently contacted my agency to state they were increasing our per diem by \$150 per day in order to cover the cost of reduced number of youth they are servicing due to a decision to not accept any more placements. I forwarded this to my TAS/TAM. My child there is not IV-E eligible. We are already paying 356/day. Is ODJFS looking into this issue?

Yes, we are aware of the request. Placing agencies should not be increasing the per diem rate for placements during this time. Any per diem increase that exceeds the reimbursement ceiling will not be reimbursed for the amount paid which exceeds the ceiling. Provider agencies are encouraged to make use of small business pandemic relief offered through the CARES Act.

At the placing agency's discretion, they may provide a supplemental payment to a provider outside of the maintenance per diem. This can be funded with the Best Practice Allocation, the Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Allocation (foster homes only), by entering a supplement using the foster care miscellaneous payment functionality in SACWIS (this will be reimbursed at the FMAP rate), and lastly through the local savings experienced by the increase in the FMAP.

Utilizing these alternative methods of providing supplements will help to maximize funding and decrease the local burden.

3. Are IV-E Courts eligible for Best Practice funding?

Unfortunately, the Best Practice Allocation was designated specifically for PCSAs in the Budget Bill. If IV-E courts have particular funding needs related to the current pandemic, please notify the ODJFS, OFC IV-E court coordinator, Ricardo Murph [Ricardo.Murph@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Ricardo.Murph@jfs.ohio.gov)

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4. Can a sample press be given to promote child abuse and neglect prevention month?

The Ohio Children’s Trust fund website includes the following link to the April 2020 Toolkit for Child Abuse Prevention Month:

<https://octf.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/octf/what-we-do/national%2Bchild%2Babuse%2Bprevention%2Bmonth/april%2B2020%2Btoolkit/april%2B2020%2Btoolkit>

Additionally, OCTF has added the following link on the OCTF website to provide COVID-19 resources and information for parents and caregivers:

<https://octf.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/octf/what-we-do/covid-19-resources/>

**Private Agencies**

1. We are a new agency that’s just received our license March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 so from my understanding we are on hold for any placements until this is all over? Is that correct?

If you received an issuance letter and license from ODJFS, you are not on hold to accept placements. You can receive placements up to your licensed number of youth. Please reach out to your licensing specialist if you have any specific questions.

2. What should we do if one of the counties we contract with is requiring in person visits for all children in their care?

Please reach out to your licensing specialist who will partner with the specific PCSA’s technical assistance specialists and managers to attempt to identify alternative methods of contact when in-person contact is deemed to be unsafe.

3. Monthly Caseworker visit is referring to the county worker? Is that correct? Does ODJFS have direction for counties that are requiring Private agencies to have face to face contact with youth monthly?

Yes, this is in reference to monthly visit by county PCSA caseworkers. Please reach out to your licensing specialist who will partner with the specific PCSA’s technical assistance specialists and managers to attempt to identify alternative methods of contact when in-person contact is deemed to be unsafe.

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4. What is the Q and A website address?

The ODJFS COVID-19 Response information is located on the ODJFS website here: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/covid19local/>, and includes the following link to the Office of Families and Children innerweb site: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/CoronavirusAndChildServices/>, which contains the link to the ODJFS COVID-19 Q & A document <http://jfs.ohio.gov/ocomm/pdf/JFS-Coronavirus-QA-Local.pdf> that is continually being updated with additional information.

5. It would be fantastic if you could give the PCSAs a heads-up that you have requested us to reach out to them.

Yes, thank you for your comment—ODJFS will be issuing these Q & As to the PCSAs so they are aware of the suggestion that private agencies are encouraged to reach out to them to offer assistance in brainstorming ideas to address the reduction in child abuse and neglect referrals during this time. This partnership can be vital to providing a community support, increased vigilance on behalf of child well-being during this time when there is a reduction of contact for children with many mandated reporters, such as school teachers and staff, mental health professionals, health care professionals, clergy, day care providers, etc.