



Vannessa L. Dorantes
Commissioner

DEPARTMENT of CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Making a Difference for Children, Families and Communities



Ned Lamont
Governor

May 19, 2020

Department of Children and Families

Update on COVID-19 Planning Operations

- Consult with the Governor's Office, other state agencies, child welfare jurisdictions across the country and community partners to be informed of and develop best practices in our work.
- Collaborate with “sister” state agencies on common issues in planning to resume full functioning strategies.
- Provide written guidance and video recorded messages to all staff, including community partners, clarifying new procedures.
- Deployed over 1,800 Tablets, including approximately 600 in one week alone, leading to over 85% of staff teleworking.
- Engage with children and families using innovative and creative methods via remote technology such as Face Time and Microsoft Teams.
- Established 4 subcommittees to develop recommendations to the Commissioner and Executive Team leading to resuming of full operations. Those groups are as follows:
 - Physical Safety
 - Emotional/Psychological Safety
 - Health/Medical
 - Personnel Considerations
- Respond in-person to those circumstances which cannot be resolved remotely while staff utilize personal protective equipment.
- Collaborated to create 100 COVID-19 testing slots available each day to youth in care over the age of 18 and to foster parents.
- Continue to monitor services to vulnerable populations such as older youth, children with specialized needs and children and families in disproportionately impacted communities.

- Established the "*When it Builds Up, Talk it Out*" campaign which includes a phone line staffed by community providers whom parents can call when in need of support.
- Conduct a contact tracing process guided by DCF Medical Director of all COVID 19 positive diagnosis.
- Presented twice at the Governor's Council on Women and Girls Health and Safety Subcommittee regarding health and safety resources available to support Connecticut children and families and how to access them during the pandemic as well as services for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children.
- Developed and regularly update a COVID-19 website at <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/COVID-19/COVID-19> which has resulted in over 15,000 unique individuals accessing the information.
- Established a specific e-mail address for internal DCF staff and external partners to ask specific questions relating to the pandemic: DCF.COVID-19@ct.gov.
- Produce a daily newsletter with information regarding supports available for children, families and staff as well as highlighting positive efforts of the workforce.
- Publish a monthly "*Spotlight on What's Right*" newsletters to enhance the Department's messaging and support the unique contributions of staff.
- Encourage staff to utilize internal supports, including the Employee Assistance Program, ensuring a healthy work/life balance.
- Established a foster parent contact database so communications can be quickly and consistently delivered and confirmed backup childcare plans with each caregiver.
- Engage in weekly conference calls with key legislators to provide Department updates and resolve issues brought to their attention. Topics include:
 - Careline call volume
 - Status of "Talk it Out" campaign
 - Placement of youth across states
 - Fiscal implications
 - Status of resuming full operations
 - Summer Camps
 - Additional Questions
- Met with leadership from 8 different state employee labor unions to answer questions and clarify operational procedures for staff throughout the department.

- Conduct weekly videoconferencing with the Children's League of Connecticut (CLOC)
- Outreach occurs daily from our Licensing Division to private providers caring for our children in congregate care facilities and program leads to trouble-shoot concerns with maintaining virtual connections to families they serve.
- Follow up on inquiries from contracted and fee-for-service credentialed providers from our Fiscal Department.
- Solicited PPE need from nonprofit provider community and submitted through the Essential Support Function process.
- Presented the Department's planning on a national call with over 200 representatives from jurisdictions across the country.

Vannessa L. Dorantes
Commissioner