

# Practice Alert



Date: May 12, 2021  
Issued by: Joanie Rogers, Interim Director

PA21-OT-01

**On May 5, 2021, Governor Parson directed team members to return to the office setting in order to provide services to the citizens of Missouri. As local and state emergency pandemic orders are lifted or relaxed and vaccines are readily available to team members and members of the community, a return to normal operations is necessary to continue to ensure the safety and well-being of the children we serve. Children's Division will resume normal day-to-day operations consistent with policy set forth in the Children's Division Child Welfare Manual. Effective May 16, 2021, all previous temporary guidance and COVID specific temporary policies will be rescinded and staff are to follow all policies set forth in the Child Welfare Manual.**

## **Children's Division Facilities/Offices:**

### **Employees:**

- Staff members, in consultation with their immediate supervisor, shall coordinate to reenter offices by May 17, 2021. Team members are expected to return to the office setting on May 17, 2021 and should address personal circumstances in the same manner that they would have prior to COVID-19 as outlined by departmental policies (i.e. DSS Policy 2-305 (Family Medical Leave Act), DSS Policy 2-123 (Work Adjustments/Accommodation Requests), etc). Social Distancing, to include maintaining a distance of six (6) feet from co-workers and wearing of masks is encouraged, unless staff are in their personal work space. Children's Division also encourages utilization of good hand washing practices and thoroughly cleaning surfaces after use in accordance with CDC guidelines. For additional guidance, the following resource is available, to include: [Return to Office FAQs and Updated Leave Guidance Related to Coronavirus Disease 19 \(COVID-19\)](#)

### **In-Person Visitation /Meetings:**

- It is the expectation that in-person visits between workers and children, workers and parents/guardians and children and parents/guardians be held in-person. If an individual notifies the employee that they are running a fever, has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or has been exposed to a person testing positive for COVID-19 within a 10 day period, then additional precautions should be taken to maintain social distancing, thoroughly clean areas in which the individual was present and encouraging individuals to utilize a facemask. If the safety of a child cannot be adequately assured (i.e. medically fragile child), virtual options may be utilized after consultation with a supervisor, team members and thorough documentation of the safety issues preventing in-person visitation. If a deviation or alternative measure is utilized, due to a COVID-19 related concern, to assure child safety, the case manager SHALL thoroughly document and identify within the FACES system by checking the COVID-19 protocol box.
- It is the expectation that in-person meetings be held to facilitate engagement of parents/guardians and treatment team members, unless the parent/guardian or treatment team member requests a virtual option. Case managers are to be present in the office to facilitate any meeting and provide a virtual alternative, upon request. If an individual is running a fever, has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or has been exposed to a person testing positive for COVID-19 within a 10 day period, then additional precautions should be taken to maintain social distancing, thoroughly clean areas in which the individual was present and encouraging individuals to utilize a facemask.

**Responsibilities for Case Managers:**

- If a case manager becomes aware that a child in the legal custody of the Children's Division (LS1 status) tests positive for COVID-19, the case manager shall immediately notify the parents/guardians, central office (Leanne Leason), and the juvenile court partners, including the juvenile office, Guardian ad Litem, and juvenile/family court judge.
- Notification to the central office (Leanne Leason) shall be made by utilizing the [COVID-19 Child Reporting](#) form which shall be emailed to [AskCDCCOVID19@dss.mo.gov](mailto:AskCDCCOVID19@dss.mo.gov). Staff only need to provide notification if the child tests POSITIVE. Notification should be made only after positive test results have been received. Actual test results do not need to be provided.
- Notification to the juvenile court partners shall be made by uploading the [Notice to Court in Response to COVID-19](#) form to Missouri Case Net's electronic filing system (<http://www.courts.mo.gov/casenet>). In the event the case manager's county/circuit does not utilize the electronic filing system, notifications shall be sent using the alternative filing process with the assistance of the juvenile office or the court clerk.
- All notifications and communication regarding COVID-19 test results shall be immediately documented in FACES.

**Court related activities:**

- Pursuant to the Missouri Supreme Court's Order, court activity in all appellate and divisions of the circuit courts shall proceed pursuant to Operational Directives issued by the Missouri Supreme Court. Children's Division Circuit Managers should be in consultation with local partners to understand expectations for court proceedings in order to advise staff.