

COVID-19 guidance for Minnesota child welfare agencies

Approved waivers and guidance issued

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) is allowing flexibility when working with children and families in the following areas:

- **Child Welfare – Targeted Case Management is temporarily changed for face-to-face contact with children requirements**

Policy modification to Child Welfare – Targeted Case Management services were made to temporarily allow telephone and video-conferencing in place of in-person face-to-face contact with children during the COVID-19 pandemic, issued Apr. 2, 2020. See [bulletin#20-69-02](#).

- **Clarification for signatures on Child Welfare-Targeted Case Management and Mental Health – Targeted Case Management Service Plans**

Effective Mar. 1, 2020, Child Welfare Targeted Case Management (CW-TCM) and Mental Health Targeted Case Management (MH-TCM) case managers may complete a service plan with the child and parent, legal guardian or legal representative; or the adult and legal representative via the telephone or through videoconference.

- **Fingerprint-based background study modifications**

The department is temporarily modifying certain statutory background study requirements. Completing studies that meet current requirements has become increasingly difficult due to closures of public fingerprinting sites, and lack of responses to requests for records from other states. The temporary modification will assist health and human service providers to quickly respond to changing workforce needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic, permitted under the [Governor's Executive Order 20-12 \(PDF\)](#), and authority granted to the human services commissioner, issued Apr. 3, 2020. See [COVID 19 background studies waiver guidance](#).

On May 9, 2020, to be in compliance with current federal guidance, the commissioner amended her previous decision to require child abuse and neglect registry checks to be conducted in other states (non-Minnesota) for background applicants for foster care, adoption, legal guardianship and children's residential facilities who live outside of Minnesota now or have within the past five years. To cover the full costs of the additional checks and associated administrative costs, the fees for these studies will be reinstated to their previous levels (\$51 for children's residential facilities and \$70 for private agency adoptions). The commissioner's amended decision is retroactive to April 6, 2020. See [#13 CV23 guidance on background studies](#)

- **Title IV-E and Background Studies During the Peacetime Emergency**

A waiver was granted regarding certain elements of background studies required in state statute and federal Title IV-E laws. Provides information on waiver's impact to Title IV-E claiming for children in out-of-home placement in family foster homes, residential facilities, and in pre-adoptive placements, issued May 19, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-23](#).

- **Modifications of timelines and face-to-face contact requirements for child protection responses for alleged maltreatment**

Policy modifications were made for face-to-face contact with children requirements, and timelines for child protection assessments and investigations, in limited circumstances related to COVID-19 precautions, issued Apr. 8, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-13](#).

- **Temporary modification of out-of-home placement plans for foster children**

Policy modifications were made to the due date and signature requirements for out-of-home placement plans. This is to ensure foster children's well-being and help stop the spread of COVID-19, issued Apr. 21, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-16](#).

- **Suspension of physical exam requirements for foster children at placement and annually thereafter**

The department suspended requirements of the responsible social services agency to arrange for preventative medical exams at initial placement and annually thereafter. This ensures foster children's well-being, and helps to stop the spread of COVID-19, issued Apr. 21, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-17](#).

- **Monthly caseworker visits requirement modified to permit video-conferencing**

Policy modification to monthly caseworker visits was made to ensure foster children's well-being, and help stop the spread of COVID-19, issued Apr. 28, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-11C](#).

- **Modification to timeline for completion of child protection worker foundation training**

Policy modification to temporarily waive the requirement for all new child protection workers to complete Foundation training within six months of hire, issued May 5, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-19](#)

- **COVID -19 Response: Parent Support Outreach Program and Family Assessment Response Allocations**

The department issued additional guidance to county and tribal agencies to maximize use of the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) and Family Assessment Response allocations to support children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic issued May 5, 2020. See [bulletin #20-68-20](#)

Guidance

- **New Social Service Information System (SSIS) county sub-service codes for COVID-19 activities and non-program related activity codes**

The Social Service Information System released a statewide sub-service code and new non-program administrative and payroll codes allowing statewide tracking of work and activities related to COVID-19, issued Apr. 10, 2020. See [bulletin #20-31-01](#).

- **Prioritizing child safety and conducting face-to-face visits**

The Child Safety and Permanency Division Leadership Team developed guidance related to prioritizing child safety and conducting visits during the COVID-19 pandemic, issued Apr. 15, 2020. See [Interim guidance on prioritizing child safety and conducting visits](#).

- **Minnesota Assessment of Parenting for Children and Youth (MAPCY) reassessment available for foster, adoption and kinship; special cost code 96 for foster care**

Options are shared with county and tribal agency staff on how MAPCY can be utilized for reassessment, or special cost code 96, to provide increased financial support for foster, adoptive, and kinship families caring for children during the COVID-19 pandemic, issued Apr. 16, 2020. See [Northstar Benefit Reassessment and Cost Code 96](#).

- **FAQs: CARES Act economic stimulus payments for children in foster care**

In March 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed, which includes an advanced payment of a new refundable tax credit for the 2020 tax year. The payment, commonly known as a federal stimulus payment, is being distributed based on tax returns filed for 2019. This may impact families with children who currently are, or have been, in foster care during the applicable filing years.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services has released general answers to frequently asked questions about stimulus payments for children in foster care. This information is not to be considered legal tax advice. Individuals are encouraged to consult with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or a certified tax professional with questions regarding specific circumstances. The IRS is providing additional guidance on its economic impact payment information center, which

is updated periodically. See [FAQs: CARES Act economic stimulus payments for children in foster care](#).

- **FAQs: Foster care in the time of COVID-19**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, responsibilities regarding placement practice continue. This includes the duty to provide active or reasonable efforts to prevent placement, and when placement is necessary, ensuring that parents and children receive culturally appropriate and available services to meet identified needs to eliminate the need for removal at the earliest possible time. Given the economic and health impacts, families are stressed and may have specific needs arise due to COVID-19 that need to be considered and incorporated in practice. See [FAQS for foster care during time of COVID](#)