



Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Commissioner

Memo

To: Facility Managers, Facility Directors/Assistant Directors, CMSO Supervisors
From: Felicia A. B. Reid, Esq., *Acting Deputy Commissioner*
Farooq Mallick, *Associate Commissioner*, Facilities Management
Date: July 21, 2020
Re: Resuming Visitation at OCFS Facilities

On March 17, 2020, as part of DJJOY’s overall response to COVID-19, entry to all OCFS residential facilities was limited to essential personnel. This included the temporary suspension of visitation by non-essential persons—including youths’ family members and legal counsel, contractors, vendors, and other service providers. As of **July 28, 2020**, facilities can “reopen” for visitation by non-essential persons. Any facility visitation will resume according to the following procedures and rules.

All visitors must obtain gate clearance **prior** to traveling to the facility by notifying their facility contact or designee. This protocol will now include:

1. Prescreening

Each potential visitor will be asked the current COVID-19 related screening questions prior to their arrival at the facility. If a potential visitor reports symptom(s) or answers “yes” to any of the screening questions, their visitation request will be denied, and facility administration will be made aware.

- a. Service providers are responsible for informing their onsite personnel of the facility’s entry protocols and directing the personnel to self-screen and not report to the facility if they are experiencing symptoms or answer “yes” to any of the screening questions.
- b. When a group of more than three service providers requests entry, facility administration must give specific approval, indicating that the group can and must maintain social distancing requirements and face covering requirements. This specific approval will be noted on the gate clearance form.

Gate clearance may be granted prior to the completion of prescreening; however, all visitors must be instructed to complete the prescreening questions on the day of their arrival. All visitors will be screened again upon arrival to the facility according to the procedures outlined below.

2. Arrival at a Facility

Upon arrival to a facility’s point of entry, the facility will inform a visitor with gate clearance that they:

- a. Must wear a mask or appropriate face covering while at the facility (unless unable due to a medical condition or under the age of two);
- b. Will be asked COVID-19-related screening questions;
- c. Will have their temperature taken by facility staff with a “no touch” thermometer; and
- d. Will receive hand sanitizer and/or directed to wash their hands prior to program entry.

The facility will inform the visitor that their responses to the screening questions, a temperature of 100°F or higher, and/or a refusal to properly wear an appropriate face covering throughout their time in the facility will result in their visit being denied/terminated. Any visitor with COVID-19 symptoms or a temperature over 100°F should be referred to their personal health professional for medical screening.

3. Visitation

All visitors are required to properly wear an appropriate face covering or face mask throughout their visitation. Visitors may either bring a face covering to the facility or the facility will issue a face mask. Face coverings brought to the facility must adhere to PPM 3455.00, *Visits to Youth in OCFS Facilities* (e.g., free from gang markings or inappropriate imagery). Staff will assist visitors in making sure they are wearing their face covering or face mask appropriately.

Visitation will be limited and scheduled in respect of the size of a facility's designated visiting area and in a manner that allows the facility to reasonably minimize visitor density, keep at least six (6) feet of social distance between visiting groups, and maintain youth supervision.

All youth and visitors will be given access to hand sanitizer and/or be permitted to wash their hands throughout the visit.

Between visits, staff will wipe down and sanitize tables, chairs, and high-contact surfaces in the visiting area.

a. Family Visitation

- i. If families are not traveling to the facility on their own, they must travel to the city or town where the facility is located and to the nearest local transportation hub (e.g., bus, train, etc.). Facilities will determine this location and inform visiting families. Facility staff will be available to pick families up and return them to the hub. The facility vans must be wiped down and sanitized between transports. When needed, facility staff will work with the CMSO to assist families with identifying local transportation vendors.
- ii. No more than three (3) family members will be permitted to visit with a youth per visit.
- iii. Youth and families may want to engage in signs of physical affection during a visit. Staff should discuss with families that, for everyone's continued safety, they should limit physical contact with the youth.
- iv. If physical contact occurs, staff must note it and, after the visit, staff will direct the youth to change their clothing, wash their hands and/or face, and/or take a shower.

- b. Contractor, youth attorney, vendor, Office of the Ombudsman (including members of the Independent Review Board), and service providers must have approval for their business function per the reopening guidelines set by the State of New York to be permitted entry to a facility.

4. Notice

The facility will mail the attached letters to, as appropriate, all youth parents/guardians and to contractors, vendors, and service providers. As facilities can "reopen" for visitation as of **July 28, 2020**, all facility staff must be made aware of the protocol changes through typical local communication prior to this date. Should there be any questions or concerns regarding this directive, please reach out to your Facility Manager.

cc:

C. Hernandez	D. Comins	N. Steinbock-Pratt
J. Tomassone	A. Sapio	N. Aledort (obo Office of the Ombudsman)
J. Carroll	K. Sena	