



Dear DCFS Youth,

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) leadership is working closely with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and health officials to address Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19 concerns. We recognize that this is a challenging time for the community and that many are fearful or anxious. DCFS will continue its child protection work and provide essential services to children and families through a variety of measures.

DCFS is currently following its Emergency Plan at level red. This indicates an increased need for resources and allows the Department to respond to this crisis while maintaining minimum operations. Under this plan, DCFS has temporarily postponed or suspended:

- In-person meetings, trainings, gatherings, and special events;
- Out-of-State travel for all Department staff (home visits are coordinated with other child welfare jurisdictions); and
- Some policies that do not affect our critical child safety work.

Below is more information to help answer your questions.

### ***DCFS Offices***

Kathryn Barger, Chair of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has ordered all Los Angeles County facilities closed to the public effective immediately. DCFS offices will remain open and accessible to employees only during this time. If you have questions, please contact your social worker or the main line of the [DCFS Regional Office](#) you are trying to reach.

### ***Monthly Visits by DCFS Social Worker***

DCFS social workers will continue to complete in-person visits when responding to child abuse referrals to assess for child safety. Social workers will complete a pre-screening before starting the in-person visit and proceed accordingly, for the protection of all engaged in the visit.

The Administration for Children and Families (federal government) and the California Department of Social Services is permitting monthly social worker visits for children already receiving services from DCFS to be accomplished through videoconferencing. Based on the circumstances of the case, visits can be in-person or through videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp). If someone in your home is feeling ill or has flu-like symptoms, please contact your social worker. Social workers will complete a pre-screening by telephone or in-person before starting the in-person visit.

### ***Visitation with Parents and Siblings***

During the state of emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all court ordered in-person visits between parents/legal guardians, children, siblings, and anyone else should continue; however, social workers are to



determine the manner of visitation to promote and maintain family bonds. Decisions about the way in which visitation is to occur shall be considered on a case-by-case basis, balancing the public health directives and the best interest of the child.

Family visits are to take place: In-person, remotely by using videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc) or by telephone calls. During this stressful time, we encourage liberal use of virtual visits and phone calls, with a reminder that visits are for children of ALL ages and parents of babies are entitled to virtual visits as well. Contact your social worker if you have questions about your visitation plan.

### ***Child and Family Team Meetings***

The Department will continue to facilitate Child and Family Team Meetings via Skype or telephone (*when families do not have Skype capabilities*).

### ***I am a Non-Minor Dependent youth and my college campus is closed. Can DCFS help me?***

If you are a Non-Minor Dependent youth enrolled in college and in-person classes were cancelled or moved online, you may be eligible for free high-speed data hotspots, headsets, and laptops from iFoster. For more information, call iFoster at (855) 936-7837 or by email at [phone@iFoster.org](mailto:phone@iFoster.org).

If you have housing needs due to campus disruptions, such as dorm closures, please contact your social worker and/or Independent Living Coordinator for additional support.

### ***Dependency Court Hearings***

Effective March 20, 2020, the Dependency Courts will open for the limited purpose of hearing or handling essential or emergency matters, this includes Detention Hearings, restraining orders, and emergencies concerning needs of children. Contact your social worker or your attorney if you have any questions. Visit the [www.lacourt.org](http://www.lacourt.org) for latest updates.

### ***Know Your Rights***

Despite the current public health situation, you still are entitled to your rights as a foster youth including access to medical care; right to contact family members, your county social worker, attorney, CASA or other advocate; and right to education and social contacts.

If you have questions, contact your social worker or reach out to an advocate. Read more about Foster Youth Rights at <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/youth/know-your-rights/>.

### ***Technology Access for Non-Minor Dependent College Students***

If you are a Non-Minor Dependent youth enrolled in college and in-person classes were cancelled or moved online, you may be eligible for free high-speed data hotspots, headsets, and laptops from iFoster. For more information, call iFoster at (855) 936-7837 or by email at [phone@iFoster.org](mailto:phone@iFoster.org).



## Resources

DCFS is working with local school districts and community partners to help accommodate your needs or connect you with additional resources.

We understand that staying home for the next several weeks while practicing social distancing may be tough. We have assembled a list of community-based resources available:

- The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) opened “grab-and-go” food centers for school families, beginning [Wednesday, March 18, 2020](#). Each child can take home two nutritious meals. Centers will be open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. To find the center nearest you: [click here](#). Check your local school district for additional resources.
- LA County Library provides many digital resources you can access 24/7, no matter where you are. A library card number and PIN is needed for access.
  - Read [eBooks](#) and listen to [audiobooks](#) on OverDrive or Libby.
  - Stream [movies and TV shows](#) on Kanopy and Hoopla.
  - Check out [digital magazines](#) via RBdigital.
  - Stream [music](#) on Freegal.
  - [TumbleBook Library](#) is an online collection of animated and talking picture books.
  - [Brainfuse](#) provides kids and learners of all ages with one-on-one homework help and tutoring from 1:00 – 10 :00 p.m. every day.
- Sign up for [ReadyRosie](#) to get texts or emails with ideas for family engagement tips and early learning opportunities.
- Educational content will stream on the [PBS SoCal](#) and [KCET](#) websites, on the free KCET app – available on Roku and Apple TV – and on the PBS Video app, also available on Roku, Apple TV as well as Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Google Play and YouTube.
- Sign up for a [weekly newsletter](#) from PBS Kids with ideas for activities and tips you can use to help children play and learn at home.

## Safety Precautions

DCFS is taking the health and safety of its clients and staff very seriously during this time. Below are simple precautions to stay safe and healthy during this time:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water after interacting with a child or family member or after touching surfaces in a family's home.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- Practice social distancing by limiting the time you spend in public and try to maintain distance from others when you do go out. Avoid places with large groups of people wherever possible.



### ***Coping with Stress***

We recognize that this is a challenging time for the community right now and that many are fearful or anxious. When you hear, read, or watch news about an outbreak of an infectious disease, you may feel anxious and show signs of stress—even when the outbreak affects people far from where you live and you are at low or no risk of getting sick. These signs of stress are normal and may be more likely in people with loved ones in parts of the world affected by the outbreak.

During an infectious disease outbreak, care for your own physical and mental health and reach out in kindness to those affected by the situation. The LA County Dept. of Mental Health is working to help communities cope with additional stress during this time. [Click here](#) to read more about coping with stress.

### ***Stay in the Know***

DCFS has increased the frequency of communications with staff, parents, youth, caregivers, and service providers to provide timely information. Although information is evolving quickly, DCFS continues to monitor developments and will share updates as they become available on the [DCFS website](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#) accounts. Please check these channels regularly for updates.

### ***Want More Information?***

We've assembled a short-list of resources below to help keep you informed during this time.

*United States Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC)*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

*California Department of Public Health*

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>

*California Department of Education*

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp>

*Los Angeles County Department of Public Health*

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>

*Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health "Coping with Stress" Flyers (available in 13 languages)*

<https://dmh.lacounty.gov/covid-19-information/>

*Los Angeles Unified School District*

<https://achieve.lausd.net/latestnews>

Hotline for families: (213) 443-1300



*Long Beach Unified School District*

<http://www.lbschools.net/District/coronavirus.cfm>

*California Children's Law Center*

<http://clccal.org/content/covid-19-resources-children-and-families>

*Alliance for Children's Rights/L.A. Opportunity Youth Collaborative*

<https://kids-alliance.org/covid-19/>