

CI Practice Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

UPDATE AS OF 3:00 PM MARCH 20, 2020

UPDATES HIGHLIGHTED

As an essential service, the Ministry is required to continue to fulfill its obligations under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, in particular assessing harm and danger and ensuring the well-being of children in care. The safety and wellness of staff is, however, also paramount so *effective immediately*, the following modifications are being made to current policy and practice requirements. Please note that these instructions will be adapted as Alberta Health's guidance to Albertans evolves.

As of March 16, 2020, all worksites as well as group care and residential facilities are being asked to limit onsite guests to **essential visitors only**. We are also asking all offices and facilities to post signage at entrances and reception.

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COURT MATTERS

To protect the health and safety of all court users, the courts are limiting all regular operations until further notice.

All levels of court continue to hear urgent matters. At this time, child protection matters will continue to be heard in the Provincial Court of Alberta.

The courts will determine how Child Intervention matters will be handled on a case by case basis. Please contact your assigned lawyer through Family and Surrogate Court Litigation (FASCL) to discuss the legal status of any particular cases. Your assigned lawyer can address any questions or concerns regarding particular cases.

If your court date has been postponed, please consult with your FASCL lawyer as to next steps and notification to interested parties. The terms and condition of each order will remain in effect.

Announcements from the [Alberta Court of Queen's Bench](#) and the [Provincial Court of Alberta](#) are linked for your reference.

To contact FASCL:

- Red Deer and areas north of Red Deer - call Edmonton 780-422-3715.
- Areas south of Red Deer - call Calgary 403-297-3360.

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HOME VISITS

Effective immediately, home visits should no longer occur for regular ongoing case management activities. Home visits should continue for urgent matters that require immediate attention at intake, assessment or that arise during ongoing case management.

For unannounced visits such as urgent matters, the initial contact and screening will take place at the door where the worker will ask pertinent questions in regards to risk of illness in the home.

If you have been asked to respond to a home on an urgent matter and you have determined someone has symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19, **DO NOT ENTER INTO THE HOME**. If immediate action appears to be required, please contact the appropriate emergency service before attending to the matter.

Child Intervention Practitioners will continue to need to maintain contact with families; however, alternate options in place of home visits and face-to-face meetings **should be used**, such as FaceTime, Skype or via phone or text. There may be circumstances where face-to-face contact is required. All staff must follow Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) guidelines to mitigate the risk. Before conducting any face-to-face or in person contact, please consult with your supervisor.

Screening Questions

When required to attend a pre-arranged face-to-face meeting for urgent matters outlined above, contact the client, agency or community partner and ask the following questions as per the screening criteria that Alberta Health Services uses.

- **Screening questions:**

- Within the last 14 days have you travelled outside of Canada?
- Have you had close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19?
- Have you had close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has travelled anywhere outside of Canada within the last 14 days before their illness?
- Have you had laboratory exposure to biological material (e.g. primary clinical specimens, virus culture isolates) known to contain COVID-19 virus?
- Is there anyone in their home with a fever and/or a cough or shortness of breath who has travelled to anywhere outside of Canada in the 14 days before they were ill?

A close contact is defined as a person who:

- Provided care for the individual, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had other similar close physical contact with the person without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment

OR

- Lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact (within 2 metres) with the person while the person was infectious

OR

- Had direct contact with infectious bodily fluids of the person (e.g. was coughed or sneezed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

- If the client does not present with any of the criteria proceed with the visit.

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- If the client states they meet some of the criteria, try to rearrange the meeting for another time and reschedule when they are symptom free. Or you can request to use telecommunications and virtual skyding if available.
- If the client indicates that they are sick and have a confirmed case of COVID-19 do not attend the home and cancel all non-essential home visits or meetings.

COURT ORDERED ACCESS

Questions have been raised concerning court ordered access. Our primary concern is ensuring the safety and well being of staff and children, youth and their parents. Maintaining a child's connections continues to be important, probably more so in challenging times. All staff must follow Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) guidelines to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. We are required to comply with court orders that issue direction regarding access. At this point in time, workers who are required to comply with court ordered access are directed to case conference with the casework supervisor, manager and family regarding how to ensure access occurs in accordance with the court order Alberta Health and AHS guidelines. The case conference should include a discussion of potential use of telephone conference, video conference or other approaches to comply with court ordered access. If face-to-face contact is planned for a visit, then all staff, including agency staff, must ensure they are following AHS guidelines to mitigate the risk of COVID-19.

FAMILY/SIBLING VISITS

 Child Intervention Practitioners will continue to need to maintain contact with families; however, alternate options in place of home visits and face-to-face meetings **should be used**, such as FaceTime, Skype or via phone or text. There may be circumstances where face-to-face contact is required. All staff must follow Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) guidelines to mitigate the risk. Before conducting any face-to-face or in person contact, please consult with your supervisor.

ONGOING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN, FAMILIES & PARTNERS

 Effective immediately, the Child Intervention standard for face-to-face contact with children, families and caregivers is suspended. While ongoing contact is required in order to support children and families with open files, consider alternative approaches to maintaining contact through email, telephone, skype etc. There may be circumstances where face-to-face contact is required. All staff must follow Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) guidelines to mitigate the risk. Before conducting any face-to-face or in person contact, please consult with your supervisor.

If case conferences have been scheduled, consider whether or not they need to proceed or whether or not they can be done via teleconference, skype etc. If in person is necessary, please use all precautions advised by Alberta Health, including social distancing, cleansing of spaces etc.

As of today, all group care and residential facilities are being asked to limit onsite guests to *essential visitors only*.

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FIRST NATION AND BAND CONSULTS

In-person band consultations are currently on hold, however maintaining connections of a child to their community continues to be important, so please consider alternative approaches through telephone or skype.

DOCUMENTATION

As you gather information related to COVID-19, please record CICIO as a **Special Caution**:

- a. Intake, Assessment, and Family Enhancement:
 - i. Any concerns regarding self isolation/travel
 - ii. Any consults with Alberta Health Services
- b. Guardianship and Custody:
 - i. Any need for the child and/or caregiver to self isolate, concerns over exposure, return from travel.

In situations where a caseworker has been informed that Alberta Health Services has advised that a child in care:

- o Has been required to self-isolate
- o Has been referred for testing due to symptoms or exposure
- o Has a confirmed positive test for COVID-19

Please record in CICIO as a **Special Caution** and fill out the **Email Template** and send immediately to cs-ci-covid-19@gov.ab.ca.

CICIO SUPPORT

NEW Effective March 19, if you require assistance with CICIO, CYIM or Case Connect, please contact the CICIO Support desk by **EMAIL ONLY** at CS.CICIOProgramSupport@gov.ab.ca.

Email support will be available Monday to Friday from 8:15 - 12:00 and from 1:00 - 4:30. The support desk is **unable to provide telephone support at this time**.

For detailed information and support regarding CICIO, CYIM and Case Connect, please visit the **CICIO Website**. You can access the website from the Children's Services Intranet site by clicking on the CICIO link on the left-hand side under popular links. Once you reach the CICIO website, you will find user guides, tip sheets, FAQs, videos, and training materials to support your use of CICIO, CYIM and Case Connect.

NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS

For any child that has been directed to self-isolate, is being tested for COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19, notification to the child's parent(s) is required for all children in temporary care. If a child is in permanent care, but maintains contact with their parent(s), notification is also required. Any updates on a child's status should also be communicated to the parent(s).

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SUPPORTS TO CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN IN CARE

Supporting caregivers of children in care to ensure that they are able to meet their ongoing needs is critical. Several provisions of existing Enhancement Act policy enable the provision of additional supports that may be required in exceptional circumstances. For ease of reference, please see the attached excerpts from current policy. If additional support requirements, unique to COVID-19 emerge, further policy guidance will be provided at that time.

As of March 15, 2020, the Chief Medical Officer of Alberta cancelled classes for K-12 schools and child care facilities. This may cause an impact to caregivers and create need for additional child care supports. Caregivers have been informed that they can make alternate child care arrangements and that we will reimburse them for those costs with NO PREAPPROVAL REQUIRED. Caregivers have been informed of this directly through an [email](#) and an [automatic call](#). These can be accessed on the [CI Portal](#).

TRAVEL

International travel of children in care was suspended as of March 12. **All prior approved out of province travel is now also suspended.** If there are exceptional circumstances to be considered, please elevate those requests to Office of the Statutory Director through your Regional Director.

EXPIRING RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES LICENSES

Licenses that are expiring can be extended for a period of up to three months.

TRAINING EVENTS

A decision has been made to cancel ALL CI staff training events currently scheduled until further notice.



INTERVENTION RECORD CHECKS (IRCs)

As of March 19, all IRCs can be sent to the centralized IRC mailbox for processing – CS-IRCRequest@gov.ab.ca.

If the IRC request is received at an office site – staff are to scan all of the documents required (form and identification) and email them to CS-IRCRequest@gov.ab.ca (this is because there may be some significant mail interruptions so we would like to keep everything electronic).

If the office gets a call from the public, as there is not an office open to receive the documents, staff are to ask the requester to scan all documents needed for the request (form and identification) and send to email box CS-IRCRequest@gov.ab.ca.

The completed IRCs will then be sent back the Region or the individual who requested it

If the requester has any questions, if they receive a positive check that they were not expecting, they can send the questions to the email box it will be monitored and answered by email or telephone call, if requested.