

Information for Contract Service Providers:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) CI Practice Response

UPDATE AS OF 5:00 PM MARCH 25, 2020

UPDATES HIGHLIGHTED

As a legislative 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.

Contract service providers are a critical partner and the safety and wellness of all of our staff and children we serve is paramount. As you are aware, the situation in Alberta is evolving rapidly and we are continuing to assess what it means for Child Intervention delivery.

Following are some information about shifts that we are making in our approach and some potential implications for contract agencies to consider.

Please note that these instructions will be adapted as Alberta Health's guidance to Albertans evolves.

We commit to providing regular updates to contract service providers.

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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. The Child Intervention worker will consult with the assigned lawyer through Family and Surrogate Court Litigation (FASCL) to discuss the legal status of any particular case. If a court date has been postponed, the FASCL lawyer will direct next steps and notification to interested parties. The terms and condition of each order will remain in effect.

The [Alberta Courts website](#) will be updated daily with new information regarding court processes. Please check this [site](#) for the most up-to date information. Announcements from the [Alberta Court of Queen's Bench](#) and the [Provincial Court of Alberta](#) are linked for your reference.

HOME VISITS

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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 Child Intervention staff have been asked to respond to a home on an urgent matter and have determined someone has symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19, **THEY ARE NOT TO ENTER INTO THE HOME.** If immediate action appears to be required, the appropriate emergency service will be called to assist 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, consultation with a supervisor is required.

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?**

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 **or any member of the home** does not present with any of the criteria proceed with the visit.
- If the client **or any member of the home** 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 skyping if available.
- If the client **or any member of the home** 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.

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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, consultation with a supervisor is required. If you, as a contract service provider have been a part of facilitating access, you will be involved in those discussions.

ONGOING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN, FAMILIES & PARTNERS

Effective immediately, the Child Intervention standards such as face-to-face contact every three months and monthly 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, consultation with a supervisor is required.

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 March 16, all group care and residential facilities are being asked to limit onsite guests to *essential visitors only*.

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

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Child Intervention Practitioners are being asked to record and track situations of suspected and/or confirmed COVID. Please report any information related to suspected or confirmed COVID of a child or a family that you are providing services to.

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). **THIS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CASEWORKER.**

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.

As of March 15, 2020, the Chief Medical Officer of Alberta cancelled classes for K-12 schools and childcare facilities. This may cause an impact to caregivers and create need for additional childcare supports.

Caregivers have been informed that they can make alternate child care arrangements and that they will be reimbursed for those costs with **NO PREAPPROVAL REQUIRED**. Caregivers have been informed of this directly through an email and an automatic call that took place on March 16, 2020.

Contract agencies may also need increased supports as a result of classes being cancelled. If that is the case, please put the supports in place and advise your contract manager.

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. If you believe that your agency falls into that category, please contact your licensing officer.

TRAINING EVENTS

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

GROUP-CONGREGATE CARE

As the situation unfolds, more information will be forthcoming as it relates to support group and congregate care.

All group care and residential facilities are being asked to limit onsite guests to **essential visitors only**.

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All group care providers are to be practicing social distancing and limit participation in social events or clubs.

If a child has been absent without permission, screen them upon their arrival.

If you suspect that a child or staff person is ill, has or has been exposed to COVID-19:

- Please go immediately to the AHS website for the most current instructions.
- You will be asked to complete a self-assessment and follow the instructions once completed.
- If required to isolate a child or self-isolate, follow the directions from AHS. These might be tailored to your specific situation.
- Document all direction received.
- Communicate these directions and instructions to your staff.
- Identify what, if any, additional supports are required.
- Implement instructions received.
- Call and report the situation to the caseworker and/or contract manager and inform them of any next steps directed or recommended by AHS.

If a child who requires isolation refuses to stay at a facility. Please contact the worker immediately.

 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. Signage can be accessed on the [Alberta Health Services](#) website.

All staff, children and essential visitors must be screened before allowing them entry into the facility, including youth returning from AWOL by using the Health Assessment Screening Questionnaire.

Ask questions about recent travel, close contact with anybody ill and any symptoms they may be experiencing. Please note any underlying/chronic health conditions that may make them more susceptible to severe COVID-19 symptoms.

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.

For group or congregate care homes, IRCs may be completed at this time without scanning and sending a copy of the completed IRC form and identification to the centralized email. This is in order to expedite the onboarding of new staff quickly in group and congregate care homes.

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In order to complete an expedited or informal IRC, please have the agency email the following to the individual completing the check:

- Name
- DOB
- Scanned copy or photograph of individual's ID (if possible)
- Driver's License #
- Personal email address
- Names and dates of birth for all of their children and children they have acted as a parent for
- Agency they will be working with

NEW

If the IRC is negative, the information will be provided back to the Agency via email. If the IRC is positive, the information will be provided to the individual requestor's personal email.

Once completed, please forward the above information, along with the outcome of the IRC to CS-IRCrequest@gov.ab.ca so that we are able to track these informal IRCs.

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

NEW

Due to the current COVID-19 crisis, the Statutory Director is authorizing all Category 4 Directors the ability to authorize Agencies on an as need basis to use Statutory Declarations as an interim measure for criminal record checks for staff who are urgently required to support children and youth under CYFEA. This must be tracked and confirmation recorded once the formal criminal record check has occurred.