



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**  
Division of Social Services

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations  
for Human Services

March 20, 2020

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ATTENTION: DIRECTORS, CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS,  
SUPERVISORS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS**

**SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR COURT ORDERED VISITATION**

**REQUIRED ACTION:** \_\_\_ Information Only \_\_\_ Time Sensitive X Immediate

**PURPOSE**

In recent weeks, North Carolina has been faced with a public health crisis, COVID-19. This virus has presented some unprecedented challenges to our child welfare system. Governor Cooper has declared a state of emergency because of the COVID-19 virus. As a result, guidance that can be implemented immediately is being provided. This guidance will remain valid throughout this public health crisis.

For parents who have court-ordered visitation, it is the Division's recommendation that counties reach out to those parents and request their consent to temporarily cease in-person visitation. Parents may agree to having video (FaceTime, Skype, etc.) or telephone visitation. For those that do not the visitation must continue, unless the director makes a good faith determination that the visitation plan is not consistent with the juvenile's health and safety, the director may temporarily suspend all or part of the visitation plan pursuant to 7B-905.1(b). If the Director suspends visitation under this provision, then they should consult with their attorney to ensure the law is followed with regard to filing a motion if the circumstances warrant.

Directors are encouraged to collaborate with the district court judge presiding over juvenile court and the Guardian ad litem office as decisions to suspend visits for children in foster care are made. Notification to parent attorneys is also recommended.

If you have questions or need clarification, please contact your Regional Child Welfare Consultant.

Sincerely,

Susan G. Osborne  
Assistant Secretary for County Operations  
Department of Health and Human Services

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LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

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Cc: Lisa T. Cauley, Deputy Director for Child Welfare  
Teresa Strom, Section Chief for County Operations  
Carla McNeill Section Chief for Licensing and Regulatory  
Kathy Stone, Section Chief for Child Protective Services and Prevention

CWS-06-2020

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