

Assessment Checklist for COVID-19 Related Issues

DCPP Procedural Issues

Investigations. Are the investigators following proper safety measures, such as wearing masks and keeping 6 feet away? Is there anyone in the home who is immune-compromised? Is there anyone in the home who has tested positive or exhibiting symptoms?

Removals. Are there removal reasons related to COVID-19?

- ❖ Health of one or more family members
- ❖ Inability to access services, tests, or programs due to facility closure or transportation problems.
- ❖ Has DCPP performed its affirmative duties by providing alternate transportation or access to virtual counseling and services?

Parenting time & Reunifications. Parenting time and reunifications should continue during the COVID-19 crisis. If normal parenting time or reunification schedule has been interrupted, are those reasons related to COVID-19? If it is a third-party logistic issue, such as facility closure, lack of transportation, lack of supervisors, DCPP should provide alternate methods to continue the parenting time or reunification. If it is a health related issue, such as the parent testing positive for the virus, DCPP should provide the technology to switch to virtual parenting time and should offer more time and frequency of virtual parenting time. General fear of the virus without specific risk assessment particular to that family should not be a reason to interrupt parenting time or reunification schedule.

Health

1. Is anyone in the home symptomatic? Has anyone in the household tested positive for COVID-19?
2. Do they need to be tested? If so, refer them to <https://covid19.nj.gov> for information on who should get tested and where to get tested.
3. Do they need mental health support? NJ Mental Health Care's Helpline offers support to individuals experiencing anxiety and worry related to the Coronavirus Pandemic.
<https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/news/press/2020/approved/20200323b.html>
4. All parents and guardians should be prepared and plan ahead. Refer families to the LSNJ hotline for assistance on seeking medical help, collecting documents and planning ahead if parents become ill.
5. As part of the crisis preparedness, LSNJ is urging all parents in New Jersey to have a power of attorney designating an alternate care taker for the children: Refer Families to the LSNJ hotline and social workers units.

Unemployment

Does anyone in the family qualify for employment-related benefits? (Unemployment Insurance/Temporary Disability Insurance/paid family leave/earned sick leave, etc.) Check out the New Jersey Department of Labor's website: <https://www.nj.gov/labor> for information on a variety of COVID-19 related employment/unemployment issues.

Housing instability

Governor Murphy has put a moratorium on all evictions and foreclosures. See Executive Order 106:
<http://d31hzlkhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20200319/ec/48/3e/a8/ff5b8c68ad863164ef963ba5/EO-106.pdf>

Food instability

1. Do they have access or ability to purchase food?
<https://hungerfreenj.org/food-assistance>
<https://www.cfanj.org/home-2/news/covid-19-updates>
2. Do they need referral to social services?
<https://www.connectebt.com/njebtclient>

Educational needs for children

1. Are the children receiving educational instruction and support from the school district?
2. Do the children have access to laptops, Wi-Fi, printer, or anything else they need to complete their assignments?

Post-petition needs of the family

Visitation

- ❖ There should not be blanket denials of in-person visitation based on general fears. If specific risk factors require prevent in-person visitation, virtual visitations should be scheduled immediately. Virtual visitations should be liberal in frequency and duration. At the very least, the virtual visitations should occur according to the court orders, but they should try for a more liberal schedule in terms of frequency and duration.
- ❖ Kin and sibling visits should continue and should be encouraged.
- ❖ DCP, courts and advocates should be familiar with technology to provide virtual visitation.

Reunification should not be delayed, but expedited when possible

- ❖ There should be a detailed outline of how reunification should happen:
 - Mode of transportation from foster home to parent's home*
 - Are their COVID-19 concerns, such as a family member testing positive? General fears, such as large number of COVID-19 cases in the county or that neighborhood, should not delay reunification. If there are specific health concerns, they should be addressed so that reunification is not delayed.*
 - Make sure child's medical documents are provided to the parent, including any insurance cards.*
 - Make sure the child's birth certificate documents are provided to the parent.*
 - Think about what the child can bring back to her parent's home? COVID-19 may restrict items because of health concerns.*
- ❖ How will follow-up checks occur under COVID-19?
- ❖ Does the parent have everything necessary to have the child at home? DCP should provide any necessities as soon as possible.

For further assistance on these and other issues, visit LSNJLAW.org