



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Dear Team,

As you may know, on Sunday, Governor DeSantis issued [Executive Order 20-51](#), declaring a Public Health Emergency and establishing Florida's Response Protocol for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). Given that there have been [two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Florida](#), I urge you to be vigilant and take the necessary precautions to maintain your health and the health of those around you – including your colleagues and the vulnerable children or adults you all serve.

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) has been closely monitoring COVID-19 since November 2019, and the agency [recently launched a website](#) to share updates and helpful resources about the virus. The website also directs visitors to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for more information and [preventative measures](#), including [guidelines for childcare program administrators](#).

HOW TO PREVENT COVID-19



Avoid close contact with people who are sick



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth



Stay home when you are sick



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects/surfaces



Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask



Wash your hands frequently* with soap and water for at least 20 seconds

**Especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing*



Please ensure that you strictly follow these guidelines and preventative measures in the workplace and in the field, including washing your hands often and going or staying home when you feel sick.

If you are requesting to go or stay home because you feel sick, you need to communicate with your supervisor and/or follow your standard operational chain of command for approval of personal leave (at this time, administrative leave is not authorized). If you are well enough to work, but believe you should stay home because of an undocumented concern that you might be contagious, you may be eligible to work from home for a temporary period – please discuss your eligibility with your supervisor, who will confer with management.

Supervisors, while you are not qualified to make a medical diagnosis, if you notice that a direct report is displaying symptoms of being sick – fever, sneezing, coughing, etc. – immediately consult with your management team about sending him or her home. To be clear, with the severity of COVID-19, it is unacceptable for someone who is or may be sick to be working.

It should also be noted, if a child or adult in your care has a suspected case of COVID-19, you must follow the protocol that is currently in place with all health care providers and practitioners, intended to contain and stop transmission of the virus. First, immediately contact your county health department or a local hospital – any hospital is equipped to handle COVID-19 – to review his or her symptoms and travel history. Then, the individual can be evaluated at the hospital, and tests will be sent to the CDC for further review.

While it is important to be aware of COVID-19, if you are healthy and taking good care of yourself, it should not prevent you from working to fulfill our shared mission: Protecting the vulnerable. To that end, until further notice, all frontline staff – such as child or adult protective investigators – are to ask the following questions prior to coming into direct contact with a potentially contagious individual or entering a home where COVID-19 may be present:

- Is anyone in your household sick, feverish, or experiencing ongoing coughing or sneezing?
- Has anyone in your household come into contact with someone who is sick, feverish, or experiencing ongoing coughing or sneezing?
- Has anyone in your household traveled outside the United States in the last three weeks?
 - *Currently, affected foreign countries include China, Iran, Italy, Japan, and South Korea.*

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes” and/or you have concerns regarding the prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms, you should try to limit physical contact, wear protective clothing (gloves), and be sure to wash your hands and sanitize any other exposed surfaces.

Additionally, all offices and facilities should continue with regular, thorough cleaning practices; display signage noting the importance of good hygiene; and be cognizant of current visitation policies, making necessary updates to limit the introduction of the virus.

Please be assured that Florida is doing everything in its power to prepare and respond to COVID-19 and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) will be available to assist as needed. Daily updates will be posted on the DOH website, and I will provide more information as I receive it.

In the meantime, if you or those you serve have any other questions pertaining to COVID-19 in Florida, please contact DOH’s COVID-19 Call Center by calling 1-866-779-6121 or emailing COVID-19@flhealth.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

God Bless,

Chad Poppell

Secretary