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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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April 6, 2020

Dear families, colleagues, constituents, and stakeholders:

As we track the latest developments regarding COVID-19 in the State, we continue to monitor and adjust our practices to meet the needs of the children and families who depend upon us within the social distancing framework outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services. The latest information regarding COVID-19 can be found at: <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

We remain devoted to the children, youth, and families of New Hampshire, and we are grateful for all that so many of you are doing to care for each other while protecting our medical system and each other from further spread of this pandemic.

Attached are two new directives to DCYF staff setting forth our approach to in-person staff contact and parent/relative/sibling/youth in-person visits. In short, as further elaborated in the directives, we are recommending that in-person contact be typically replaced with increased video and telephonic conferences whenever feasible. We do recognize that exceptions exist in particularly high-risk and high-need situations, and our supervisory team is empowered to consider those circumstances to make the best decisions in balancing competing interests of individual child safety and well-being with broader and very real public health considerations.

If you are concerned about a decision we have made regarding in-person contact, please reach out to your local DCYF staff person, their supervisor, or to DCYF State Office at 603-271-4451. These are trying times and we always seek to make decisions that best meet the needs of our children and youth. Your input can help us make better-informed decisions.

Below are resources to assist in talking to children and youth in care about what is happening. I continue to share these resources, because our children's resiliency depends upon our ability to calmly and thoughtfully support them through this unfamiliar time. We need to help them understand without being fearful.

- [Talking about Diseases in the News](#)¹ (Bradley Hospital)
- [How to Talk to Your Kids about Coronavirus](#)² (PBS)
- [How to Talk to Kids about Coronavirus](#)³ (NY Times)
- Talking to Children During Infectious Disease Outbreaks⁴ (SAMHSA)

¹ <https://www.bradleyhospital.org/talking-about-diseases-news>

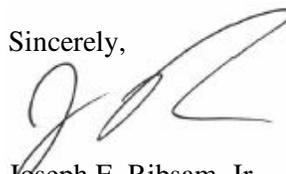
² <https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-coronavirus>

³ <https://parenting.nytimes.com/childrens-health/coronavirus-kids-talk>

⁴ <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/PEP20-01-01-006>

Thank you for your dedication to our children, youth, families, and each other during this most challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JER", is positioned above the typed name.

Joseph E. Ribsam, Jr.

Director

NH Division for Children, Youth, and Families