



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

**Executive Office of Health and Human Services**

**Department of Youth Services**

***Modifications to Visitation Guidance and Passes Protocols  
during COVID 19***

This protocol establishes the guidelines and procedures that all Department of Youth Services (“DYS”) state and contracted provider residential and community staff must follow as DYS resumes providing youth the opportunities for in-person visits and passes during COVID 19. DYS reserves the right to revoke or modify this guidance and protocols at any time, if it determines that the public health and/or safety of youth and staff are at risk, or to comply with state and federal guidance.

DYS acknowledges the challenges experienced by our youth and families due to restrictions on in- person visiting procedures during the pandemic. Consistent with guidance from CDC and DPH, DYS plans to add indoor visitation options for families and/or legal guardians beginning October 1st,2020, and continue issuing passes for eligible youth.

The in-person visits and passes are subject to very specific requirements that are essential to maintain the health and safety of our visitors, youth and staff. Family engagement activities and group visits remain suspended at all DYS residential locations. Virtual visits will continue to occur for all youth and families. DYS caseworkers, DCF social workers, clergy and attorneys may continue to visit locations in accordance with the previously established protocol for those visits. For the purpose of this guidance, visitors do not include designated support workers for youth with a disability or special needs. Passes for eligible youth to leave their residential placement will be granted for activities that support their safe and effective transition back to the community. Passes are to be used to facilitate family re-integration, re-orientation to school/work, and as opportunities to obtain a state ID, apply for community- based programming and to initiate medical, counseling, and clinical services, as appropriate.

While the guidance in this document includes important measures and precautions to stop the spread of the virus, it is not possible to anticipate the individual circumstances of each youth and their visitors. This guidance should be adjusted to accommodate individual circumstance to the extent reasonable with risk reduction in mind.

## **IN-PERSON VISITS IN DYS RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS**

### **General Requirements:**

- Visitations will not be permitted with anyone who is currently under isolation because they are presumed or confirmed COVID-19 positive or anyone who is quarantined because of a close contact <sup>1</sup> with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.
- The Program where the youth lives must not have any confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases in youth or staff in the past 14 days.
- Supervised in- person visits will be permitted in DYS approved designated outdoor and indoor spaces at each location. If tents are used to provide the shade or shelter, they must have open sides to allow for proper airflow.
- When visits occur in an indoor approved space, programs must designate a location that ensures social distancing from other residents and staff and minimizes visitor impact on the Program space and routines of other youth. Program Management must ensure that ventilation systems operate properly, have been serviced in accordance with manufacturer recommendations, including cleaning of filters, and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.
- The visiting space used must be visually inspected by staff prior to and immediately following each visit, to ensure that the safety and security of the space has not been compromised and/or contraband left in area.
- A youth may have two family members which may include siblings/guardians visit at a time. DYS will be evaluating the process and may increase the number of individuals allowed and/or the frequency of visits based on health and safety outcomes related to this protocol and CDC and DPH guidance.
- Youth who are parents may request a visit with their child. An approved family member/or legal guardian will be granted permission to bring a youth's child to visit. Prior to the scheduling of a child visit, the youth must be advised that DYS encourages maintaining social distancing with their child during the visit to protect the health and safety of everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive person for at least 10-15 minutes while the person was symptomatic or within the 48 hours before symptom onset, or someone who tested positive for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms, in the 48 hours before their test was taken or anytime in the 10 days after the test

- All visits are to be scheduled in advance with Program Management. Potential visitors will be made aware of the Department’s protocol on COVID screening and entrance to locations. Each site may have varied visit times to ensure that appropriate staffing levels and ratios are adhered to. In addition to scheduling, Program Management will be responsible for ensuring the appropriate level of supervision by staff who are knowledgeable about this visitation guidance and the guidance on basic COVID-19 safety and infection control.
- Each visitor must call the program the day of their scheduled visit to confirm they are still coming, that they are not sick and that they do not have a fever. The visitor will also be advised that they will be required to answer a series of screening questions, including questions regarding recent travel and have their temperatures taken prior to entering the visiting area. Each visitor’s information will be logged in the visiting log as required per DYS policy 03.04.04(c) Residential Visitation Incorporating Family Engagement Principles.
- Each visitor will leave the visiting location with an informational sheet that outlines how to notify the program, should they experience COVID-19 symptoms after having participated in a visit.
- Visitors, youth and staff must continue to adhere to the vision and spirit of the DYS Policy 03.04.04(c), Residential Visitation incorporating Family Engagement Principles, in particular, sections E, regarding denial or limitations of Visits; Section F, regarding supervision requirements and conduct during visits; and Section G, regarding Safety and Security Measures.
- Staff must continue to adhere to DYS Policy 03.01.02(a), Searches in Secure Facilities (Hardware Secure) or DYS Policy 03.01.03(a) Searches in Residential Facilities (Staff Secure).
- Visits are subject to cancellation at any time per DYS policy.

### **Screening for all Visitors:**

Staff and visitors will adhere to the Department of Youth Services Single Point of Entrance (SPE) and Screening Question Protocols for all entry to DYS sites to gain access to the DYS approved space for visits.

#### *STANDARD PROCEDURE*

1. All individuals seeking admittance to the visiting space must be screened per the DYS COVID-19 Screening Protocol.
2. Visitors arriving by personal automobile should park in one of the approved parking areas and walk directly to the Single Point of Entry (SPE). Visitors without a car or approaching on foot should proceed directly to the SPE to be screened.
3. Once at the SPE, the visitor will be greeted by a Screener.
4. The Screener will begin by verbally reviewing the COVID 19 Screening Questionnaire. If the person being screened satisfactorily answers the questions asked, a temperature screening will then take place. The results of the questionnaire and the temperature screening are to be documented in the COVID-19 sign in log.
5. Verbal screening for symptoms of COVID-19, contact with COVID-19 cases and recent travel include the following questions:

a) Today or in the past 24 hours, have you had any of the following symptoms?

- Fever or chills
- Cough other than what you normally experience
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue, muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

b) In the past 14 days, have you had close contact with a person who was tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

c) Within the past 14 days, did you travel outside of [lower-risk states](#).

6. Individuals with any of the conditions described in the questionnaire are not allowed to visit. Individuals with body temperature 100.0 F or higher are not allowed to visit. Additionally, any person refusing to answer the screening questions shall not be allowed to visit.

**Cloth Face Covering and Social Distancing:**

- All visitors over 2 years of age are required to wear a cloth face covering during the entire visit as well as during the screening procedure unless the cloth face covering causes difficulty breathing and/or if the visitor has a specific medical condition. The Location Manager should consider whether any accommodation can be made for the visit.
- The Facility or Program will provide each visitor with a cloth face covering for the first visit at the SPE. Both the youth and visitor must wear a cloth face covering for the entire visit. The visitor will be asked to retain the cloth face covering and clean the cloth face covering for use in future DYS visits.
- Youth and their visitors must wear a cloth face covering, unless an accommodation has been granted by Location Manager, and they will be encouraged to maintain social distancing during visits by remaining at least 6 feet apart. Chairs will be arranged to support social distancing. Visitors may not move the items in the visiting space.
- A visitor must remain at least 6 feet from the youth and staff member(s) to the maximum extent feasible.
- Brief physical contact may be allowed if desired by the youth and visitor. In order to reduce risk of transmission, individuals should:
  - Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol before and after contact;
  - Hug with faces in opposite directions; and
  - Limit the duration of close physical contact and avoid close face-to-face contact even when face coverings are used.
- Following these precautions will help reduce the risk of transmission and protect the health and safety of everyone.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting Visitation Area Protocol:**

The SPE and any area used for visits, as well as the items in that area such as chairs and tables will be disinfected using [EPA-approved disinfectant for use against SARS-CoV-2](#) after each visit.

### **PASS FOR ELIGIBLE YOUTH TO LEAVE THEIR RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT**

Youth passes support a graduated re-entry to the community by allowing for increasing levels of self-management by the youth and promote a youth's successful transition back to their home community. Passes also allow youth to begin to connect with resources that will support their transition and will sustain their success once they are back to their home communities.

### **General Requirements**

Youth passes are governed by DYS Passes Policy #: 03.02.25(b). Youth passes will continue to be issued for eligible youth. DYS shall determine the pace of a youth's progression from supervised ground passes at their residential programs, to supervised business passes that directly support critical risk-need areas in a youth's service plan, and ultimately to supervised community passes and home passes based on the youth's circumstances and the youth's treatment plan. Employees should adhere to the DYS Safety Protocol for Home Passes for additional details.

### **Youth and Staff Safety**

A youth will undergo a Wellness Check to determine if the youth is healthy to participate in passes.

- All staff will remind and encourage youth to self-assess while on a pass and to immediately inform the supervising staff or caseworker of any respiratory or cold like symptoms, such as, cough, chills, or body aches, or any change in how they physically feel.
- Prior to a home visit, the parent/legal guardian will be required to sign an attestation that there is no one residing or otherwise in the home during the home visit who is known or suspected to have COVID-19. The parent/guardian will also be asked to provide the names and contact information for any person the youth is anticipated to come into contact while at home on a pass in case contact tracing becomes necessary.

- During the pass for a home visit, the youth, the parent/guardian, other household members, and visitors present in the home should wear cloth face coverings, practice social distancing and good hand washing hygiene.
- All youth returning from a pass will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and fever, will shower/ change clothes and meet with the regional health services staff to assess the exposure risk and receive additional guidance. All youth will follow DYS protocol on wellness checks and wear cloth face coverings for 14 days, practice social distancing and good hand hygiene, and clean and disinfect common areas after each use.