

# Ramsey County Children and Family Services

## Child Protection Triage Recommendations

The RCCFS priority remains keeping children safe.

### Assessment and Investigations Safety Priorities

#### Importance of Seeing Children During an Investigation

- Safety is the top priority, and children must be seen during an investigation for CFS to appropriately assess safety.
- If a parent or guardian is denying access to see the child, citing concerns about the coronavirus, then the investigator may need to work with the Ramsey County Attorney's Office and request an ex parte order from the court.
- It may be helpful for the investigator to educate the parent or guardian by providing a copy of the CDC guidelines about limiting the spread of coronavirus and explaining that the RCCFS is taking necessary precautions, such as diligently washing hands and staying home when sick.  
*\*In any situation where face to face contact is necessary, the below guidance on home visits will be followed.*

If all services cannot be provided on an individual caseload, the below recommendations provide guidance on how to prioritize cases based on safety:

1. New incoming investigation reports
  1. Priority 1 (Top priority): This includes safety assessment for 24 hour investigations
  2. Priority 2: for children ages 5 and under and children with medical or developmental needs
  3. All other 5 day cases
2. New incoming Differential Response (DR) reports
  1. DR for child ages 5 and under and children with medical or developmental needs
  2. All other DR reports
3. Open investigations that are pending
  1. Any that have not been initiated
  2. All other investigations: supervisor assesses which still need services and follow up visits
    - a. Take into consideration age of children and develop follow up plan
  3. As time allows, close investigations
4. Open and pending DR cases
  1. Any that have not been initiated
  2. All other DRs: supervisor conferences and assesses which still need services
    - a. Take into consideration age of children and develop follow up plan
  3. As time allows, close Differential Response where no services needed

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#### Child Protection Case Management Priorities

All in-person, face to face visits are suspended except in emergent situations. Safety protocol will be utilized when home visits are absolutely necessary (as determined with Supervisor approval).

#### Use alternative communications for monthly contacts

Please use available technology as a substitute for in-person visits. Consider making telephone calls, video calls, text messages, email or similar approaches as a means to communicate with the people we serve. Monthly contacts with children and are required at minimum, more frequent contact may be required on a case by case basis.

#### Exceptions/Emergencies

There will be circumstances where Social Workers will still need to make home-visits in emergent situations. Examples of this include:

- A current placement is falling apart or has disrupted and transportation is needed.
- A case has recently opened in the last 30 days and contact via phone has been unsuccessful.
- Contact via phone has been unsuccessful in verifying adherence to an in-home safety plan.

Social Workers will consult with their supervisor to determine whether an in-person visit is necessary. If the worker and supervisor agree to an exception, workers will initiate the face to face interaction. If a Social Worker is uncomfortable making face to face contact, worker will submit a request for a CP First Responder volunteer. *\*In any situation where face to face contact is necessary, the below guidance on home visits will be followed.*

If all services cannot be provided on an individual caseload, the below recommendations provide guidance on how to prioritize cases based on safety.

1. All In-home cases with a safety plan
2. Cases open less than 30 days
3. Cases with children in out of home placement
4. Case with an in-home service in place: Call the contract provider to ensure service is still being provided in the home and get an update on the family. Then, document in SSIS.
5. Case open more than 30 days and visit has occurred in last 30 days: conference with supervisor and assess whether any service or visit is needed
6. Open Trial Home Visit
7. Open cases where child has reunified, and custody returned to parent(s) in last 30 days

#### Other Considerations

- Transitional Youth Ages 18-21

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- a) Extended Foster Care Social Worker to call each of the youth and get an update from them
  - i. If the youth can't be reached by phone, the youth needs to be seen.
- Youth placed in Independent Living: In person visit needed
- Child placed in Facility
  - Emergency shelter: Phone call to shelter staff and to foster child, with assessment and guidance from supervisor
  - Contract Psychiatric Residential: Phone call to case manager and to foster child, with assessment and guidance from supervisor
- Child in Pre-Adoptive Placement: Social Worker calls or FaceTimes each child and family
- ICPC Families in-state: ICPC Social Worker calls each child and family
- Child placed in foster home: Phone call to foster home
- Child placed in JDC: Phone call to JDC and speak with supervisor at JDC

### Foster Parents Limiting Face-to-Face Contact with RCCFS

If the foster parent denies RCCFS access to the home due to concerns about the coronavirus, this should be conferenced with the supervisor to assess the safety priority. It may be appropriate to allow phone contact, either by phone call or FaceTime, instead of an in-person visit.

### Guidance on Home Visits

Before making a home visit, call the client and ask the below questions. If the client does not have a phone or cannot take calls, ask the questions when you arrive but before entering.

1. Do you have a fever (greater than 100.4°F) OR symptoms of lower respiratory illness, such as cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?
2. Have you traveled out of state or out of the country in the last 14 days? Where did you travel?
3. Have you come into close contact (within 6 feet) with someone who has a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis in the past 14 days?
4. Is anyone in your home under quarantine by the Minnesota Department of Health?

If client answers yes to any question, staff will consult with Supervisor as necessary to determine whether visit will proceed. Supervisor will help assess the safety priority and may consult with Manager if further guidance is needed.

If client answers no, continue with the visit while:

- Maintaining 6ft CDC recommended distance from individual/family
- Remain outside during the visit if possible.
- Avoid touching face or neck
- Limit the amount of equipment that you are using in the field
- Use hand sanitizer and/or wash hands as soon as possible.

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