



## Information for contract service providers

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) Child Intervention response

**Update as of 430 PM March 16, 2020**

As an essential service, the Ministry is required to continue to fulfill its obligations under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, in particular assessing harm and danger and ensuring the well-being of children.

Contract service providers are a critical partner and the safety and wellness of all of our staff and children we serve is paramount. As you are aware, the situation in Alberta is evolving rapidly and we are continuing to assess what it means for Child Intervention delivery.

Following is some information about shifts that we are making in our approach and some potential implications for contract agencies to consider.

Please note that these instructions will be adapted as Alberta Health's guidance to Albertans evolves.

We commit to provide regular updates to contract service providers.

#### **Home Visits**

Child Intervention Practitioners will continue to need to meet with families; however before going to a home to meet with a client during assessment or casework duties, they will consider the following:

#### **Screening Questions**

Prior to going on a home visit child intervention staff will call the family and ask the following questions as per the screening criteria that Alberta Health Services uses.

- Screen clients on the phone prior to attending a home for pre-planned visits (see screening criteria below).
- Screening questions:
  - Within the last 14 days have you travelled outside of Canada?
  - Have you had close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19?
  - Have you had close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has travelled anywhere outside of Canada within the last 14 days before their illness?
  - Have you had laboratory exposure to biological material (e.g. primary clinical specimens, virus culture isolates) known to contain COVID-19 virus?
  - Is there anyone in their home with a fever and/or a cough or shortness of breath who has travelled to anywhere outside of Canada in the 14 days before they were ill?
- If the client does not present with any of the criteria they will proceed with normal practice.



- If the client states they meet some of the criteria, the meeting will be rescheduled or completed through telecommunications or virtual if available.
- If the client indicates that they are sick and have a confirmed case of COVID-19 staff will not attend the home and all non-essential home visits or meetings will be rescheduled.

For unannounced visits such as urgent matters, the initial contact and screening will take place at the door where the worker will ask pertinent questions in regards to risk of illness in the home.

If Child Intervention staff been asked to respond to a home on an urgent matter and have determined someone has symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19, **they are not to enter the home**. If immediate action appears to be required, police will be called to assist.

## **Documentation**

Child Intervention Practitioners are being asked to record and track situations of suspected and/or confirmed COVID. Please report any information related to suspected or confirmed COVID of a child or a family that you are providing services to.

## **Supports to Caregivers of Children in Care**

Supporting caregivers of children in care to ensure that they are able to meet their ongoing needs is critical. Several provisions of existing Enhancement Act policy already enable the provision of additional supports that may be required in exceptional circumstances.

As of March 15 2020, the Chief Medical Officer of Alberta cancelled classes for K-12 schools and child care facilities. This may cause an impact to caregivers and create need for additional child care supports. Caregivers are being informed that they can make alternate child care arrangements and that they will be reimbursed them for those costs with **no preapproval required**.

Caregivers are going to be informed of this directly through an email and an automatic call (see attached).

Contract agencies may also need increased supports as a result of classes being cancelled. If that is the case, please put the supports in place and advise your contract manager.

The Ministry will be working with group and residential care facilities to create a consistent approach in alignment with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to address issues of concern. More information will be forthcoming.

## **Family/Sibling Visits, Services, Court Orders and Court Ordered Access**

Child Intervention Practitioners will need to make decisions about what is in a child's best interest in line with current advice from Alberta Health. Maintaining a child's connections continues to be important; probably moreso in challenging times. Each circumstance will have unique considerations. Please work directly with a child's caseworker on plans for family contact that factor in safety and the most current advice from Alberta Health.



## Travel

International travel of children in care was suspended as of March 12. As of March 15, all prior approved out of province travel is now also suspended.

## Ongoing Contact with Children, Families and Partners

While ongoing contact is required in order to support children and families with open files, consider alternative approaches to maintaining contact through email, telephone, skype etc.

If case conferences have been scheduled, staff have been asked to consider whether or not they need to proceed or whether or not they can be done via teleconference, skype etc. If in person is necessary, they have been advised to use all precautions advised by Alberta Health, including social distancing, cleansing of spaces etc.

As of today, all worksites as well as group care and residential facilities are being asked to limit onsite guests to ***essential visitors only***. We are also asking all offices and facilities to post the attached note at entrances and reception.

## Expiring Residential Facilities Licenses

Licenses that are expiring can be extended for a period of up to three months. Please connect directly to your licensing officer if you think that this applies to you.

## Training events

A decision has been made to cancel ALL CI staff training events currently scheduled until further notice.