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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

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PIN 20-08-CRP

TO: ALL LICENSED CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY APPROVED OR CERTIFIED HOMES
ALL CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM STAFF

FROM: *Original signed by Pamela Dickfoss*
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**SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM – COVID-19 FREQUENTLY
ASKED QUESTIONS**

Provider Information Notice (PIN) Summary

PIN 20-08-CRP provides a list of frequently asked questions regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic received through the dedicated Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) e-mail address announced through [PIN-20-05-CCLD](#) and posed by licensed children's residential facilities, licensed foster family homes, and homes certified or approved by a foster family agency.

This PIN provides answers to frequently asked questions received from Children's Residential Program (CRP) licensees and providers submitted to the dedicated CCLD e-mail address CCLCOVID-19INFO@dss.ca.gov announced through [PIN 20-05-CCLD](#). Questions have been reviewed and answered by the CRP Policy Unit staff.

Questions regarding general recommendations for prevention, containment measures, and mitigation measures for one or multiple facilities or questions regarding visitation, planned activities, buildings and ground issues, capacity, staffing ratios, personnel requirements, and administrator certification, as well as the statewide waivers recently issued regarding these topics are covered in detail in [PIN 20-04-CRP](#). You may also find other useful information in the 2020 [Provider](#)

[Information Notice archive](#) and in the 2020 [All County Letters \(ACL\) archive](#).

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is taking actions to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the people of California. CDSS is recommending that children's residential licensed facilities, licensed foster family homes, and homes certified or approved by a foster family agency follow guidance or instructions from their [Children's Residential Regional Office](#), including but not limited to all [CDSS PINs](#) applicable to children's residential facilities, in addition to guidance or instructions from health care providers, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#), and [local health departments](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What sort of cleaning and disinfecting steps should licensees take to help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: Enhance cleaning and disinfection in your facility or home consistent with CDC guidance. See [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#) for households, and [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#). In addition, use the following best practices:

- Encourage [hand washing](#) by youth, staff or family members for at least 20 seconds through education, scheduling time for handwashing, and the provision of adequate supplies (CDC tips available at <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>). Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers to supplement routine hand washing. Require all staff, youth returning to the facility, and visitors entering the facility to wash their hands upon entry or utilize hand sanitizers.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces following the manufacturer's guidance. Frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to, commodes, toilets, faucets, hand and/or bed railings, telephones, door handles and knobs, computer equipment, tv remotes, and kitchen food preparation surfaces.
- Clean and disinfect rooms after use by a visitor and youth in care.
- Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
- Management of laundry, food service utensils, and medical waste should be performed in accordance with routine procedures.

Q: What should facilities do if a youth leaves the facility without permission and engages in activities that potentially expose them to COVID-19?

A: Licensees, caregivers, administrators, and staff are encouraged to stress the importance to youth of state and local stay at home orders and engage in social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to engage the youth and members of the child and family team to identify activities and resources that will support the youth remaining home. However, licensees cannot physically restrain or otherwise prevent a youth from leaving the premises.

If a youth returns after being off the premises, licensees should not refuse to take the youth back into their home or facility. Possible, or known, exposure of a child to COVID-19 is not in and of itself a reason for removal from placement, as this could

cause significant trauma to the child and may contribute to additional community spread, placing an unnecessary strain on the child and on emergency COVID-19 response infrastructure and mitigation efforts. It is reasonable for licensees to establish protocols that include screening of children before bringing them back into care, and to communicate these to youth before the unapproved absence from placement occurs. Consistent with public health guidance, placement preservation and providing care to youth in their own homes is a priority during this pandemic. See [ACL 20-33](#), for additional guidance.

As California continues to focus on ways to mitigate the spread of the virus, licensed facilities, licensed foster family homes, and homes certified or approved by a foster family agency should be revising their emergency procedures to take into account this rapidly changing situation, as recommended in [PIN-20-04-CRP](#).

Q: What sort of safety precautions should congregate care facilities use if someone is showing symptoms of, or has tested positive for, COVID-19?

A: Control of COVID-19 exposure and outbreaks is particularly challenging in congregate care settings due to rotating employees entering and exiting the facility daily, larger populations of children in close quarters, and challenges implementing regimented sanitizing throughout the day. Therefore, children's residential care providers should establish health screening protocols for new admissions, for children returning from being off the premises of the facility, and for staff who enter and exit the facility each day. Please refer to [PIN-20-04-CRP](#) and [ACL 20-33](#), pages 5-8, for detailed congregate care guidelines on what to do if someone in your facility is exhibiting symptoms of a respiratory infection or has tested positive for COVID-19.

Q: Can or should facilities close to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: Governor Newsom issued [Executive Order N-33-20](#) directing all residents immediately to stay home, except as needed to maintain continuity of operations of essential critical infrastructure sectors and additional sectors as the State Public Health Officer may designate as critical. The [list of essential workers issued by the State](#) can be found at <https://covid19.ca.gov/img/EssentialCriticalInfrastructureWorkers.pdf>.

The list includes "Workers that provide or determine eligibility for food, shelter, in-home supportive services, child welfare, adult protective services and social services, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals (including family members)." Facilities and homes providing residential care to children fall into this broad category. Because you are providing essential services you are exempt from state and local orders to close business. It is important that your facility or home continue to provide care to youth during this time with as little disruption as possible, and in accordance with the placement preservation guidance in [ACL 20-33](#).

Q: Are facilities allowed to suspend admissions due to COVID-19?

A: As described in the above answer, providing care and supervision to children in out-of-home care is considered an essential, critical infrastructure function. Current regulations and licensing standards require that licensees make admissions decisions on an individual basis with consideration of whether or not the facility is able to meet the child's needs. A blanket non-admit policy is not allowed. Licensees must take the health and safety of all children in care into account and consider the needs of those currently in the home or facility when making the admission decision. Individual assessments should be made consistent with admission determination procedures as outlined in California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 6 (Title 22) and CDSS Interim Licensing Standards (ILS):

- Crisis Nurseries, Title 22 Section [86568.1](#)
- Foster Family Agencies, Title 22 Section [88068.1](#), ILS Sections [88268.1](#) and [88268.11](#)
- Foster Family Homes, Title 22 Section [89468](#), and AB 12 ILS Section [894168](#)
- Group Homes, Title 22 Section [84068.1](#), [84168.1](#), and AB 12 ILS Section [84468.1](#)
- Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs, ILS Sections [87068.05](#), [87068.1](#), and [87068.11](#)
- Small Family Homes, Title 22 Section [83068.1](#)
- Temporary Shelter Care Facilities, ILS Sections [84668.05](#) and [84668.1](#).
- Transitional Housing Placement Providers, Title 22 Section [86068.1](#), and AB 12 ILS Section [86168.1](#)
- Youth Homelessness Prevention Centers, ILS Section [84568](#)

Admissions decisions relating to COVID-19 should be made consistent with instructions from the child's medical provider and guidance from the local public health authority, as applicable. Children's residential care providers should establish health screening protocols for new admissions as described in [ACL 20-33](#).

In order to protect the health and safety of children in care, if a licensee refuses to accept a child diagnosed with COVID-19 based on an individual assessment and consistent with admission determination procedures and applicable law, this refusal should only be for a period of time necessary for recovery, including the period of contagion. The admission decision should be supported by documentation from a medical provider.

In order to protect the health and safety of children in care, if a licensee refuses to accept a child known to have been exposed to COVID-19 based on an individual assessment and consistent with admission determination procedures and applicable law, this refusal should only be for a period of time necessary to ensure that the child will not develop the disease and/or the illness resolves and/or the child is determined not to be contagious. These determinations should be made consistent with instructions from the child's medical provider and guidance from the local public health authority.

In order to protect the health and safety of children in care, if a licensee refuses to accept a child suspected of being exposed to COVID-19 and the facility's screening protocols support the decision and the facility is unable to adequately isolate the child, a denial based on this risk should only be for a period of time necessary to ensure that the child will not develop the disease and/or the illness resolves and/or the child is determined not to be contagious. The admission decision must be made on an individual basis consistent with admission determination procedures and applicable law. For guidance on screening procedures, see [ACL 20-33](#). A blanket policy to deny admissions of all children based on a perceived risk of exposure to COVID-19 is not allowed.

Q: Will the Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) be providing licensees with masks and gloves?

A: CCLD is working to secure supplies of gloves and masks to help facilities mitigate exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Given that these supplies are in extremely high demand throughout the state, their availability fluctuates from day to day and from location to location. Facilities are encouraged to take initiative in securing these supplies on their own. Facilities can also check in with their assigned Licensing Program Analyst to determine if and when CCLD might have any available.

Q: What should facilities do for youth education-wise now that school is out?

A: Licensees are encouraged to stay in touch with a youth's school district and read all announcements on the school district's website, as many districts have launched "[distance learning](#)," which includes educational lessons online and work that can be completed at home. Your local school district will also have information on the school meal program, internet access, and other educational resources during the emergency. Staff should ensure that, where available, youth are participating in distance learning, and should review assignments from the school and assist youth in establishing a reasonable pace for completing the work. Creating a distance learning schedule and routine for completing schoolwork that involves scheduling breaks and free time is recommended.

- The CDC provides further [tips regarding home education](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children.html) during the COVID-19 crisis at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/children.html>.
- For more [information on K-12 schooling](https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp) during the COVID-19 crisis, refer to the California Department of Education at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp>

If you have any questions that are not addressed by this PIN or by other recently published [CRP and CCLD PINs](#), please contact the CCLD's COVID-19 specific email at CCLCOVID-19INFO@dss.ca.gov.

Going forward, CRP will continue to issue PINs with additional frequently asked questions related to COVID-19 as needed.