

# State of New Mexico

## CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

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April 29, 2020

Dear Caregiver,

We hope this note finds you and your family as well as can be. With New Mexicans all over the state practicing social distancing, together we have been able to limit the spread of COVID-19 and not overwhelm the state's healthcare systems.

To further prevent the spread of the virus, the New Mexico Supreme Court has announced that it is continuing the suspension of court-ordered, in-person visits. Video and telephone visits will still be required. The new order does not have an end date; the Court will set an end date when conditions improve.

CYFD will continue to work closely with the courts, the Department of Health, and the Governor's office to make sure we can balance the need to protect public health while maintaining family connections.

Per the New Mexico Supreme Court order, the first preference will remain a video visit, with the second preference being a telephone visit. It is our intent to continue "over visiting" with more frequent video and/or phone contacts to help reduce the potential trauma of children not seeing their biological families for more than 30 days.

The order does allow CYFD or the child's family to petition the court for in-person visits and we have already made a number of these petitions. District courts may approve such petition(s). We remain committed to reinstating in-person visits as soon as it is deemed safe to do so. Family reunification, whenever it is safe to do so, is the foundation of New Mexico's child welfare system. Visits and connection are key to family reunification.

Thank you for your support of the children and young people in your care. Your work to make sure they are well taken care of, every day and especially during this crisis has been incredible. We are so grateful. Your case worker remains available to assist with your needs-- please continue to use them as a point of resources and support.

Sincerely,

  
Brian Blalock