

State of New Mexico

CHILDREN, YOUTH and FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

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April 29, 2020

CYFD Family,

We hope this letter finds you in good health as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread across New Mexico. We are writing to continue to update you on the suspension of in-person visits with children in CYFD's custody. On March 27th, the New Mexico Supreme Court made the decision to extend its order suspending court-ordered in-person visits. The order still allows parties to file a petition for an exception, which would allow the visits to take place. Under the current order, if in-person visits cannot be held, then continued contact should be maintained by video or phone.

In-person visits will remain suspended until the court determines it is safe to resume. This is due to the continued concern for the health of the general public and to help to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus spreading in our communities here remains a high concern for new outbreaks, therefore, social distancing measures remain in place to ensure the safety of our children and their families.

Recently, Governor Lujan Grisham extended the stay at home order until May 15. The Governor and the Department of Health continue to assess the risk of virus spread on a frequent basis.

We are committed to reinstating in-person visits as soon as it is deemed safe to do so and will let you know as soon as the Court order is lifted.

As with the initial Supreme Court order, the first preference will continue to be to conduct visits via video, with the second preference being a telephone visit. This Court ordered in-person visit suspension only applies to children in CYFD custody and has no impact on private child custody matters.

The order does allow CYFD or the child's family to petition the court for in-person visits. This may happen in accordance with reasons outlined in the Letter to Caregivers dated 3.20.20 or for other reasons. Please reference that letter, here: [https://cyfd.org/docs/Letter to Caregivers 3 20 20.pdf](https://cyfd.org/docs/Letter_to_Caregivers_3_20_20.pdf). District courts may approve such petition(s).

We have already sent several dozen petitions to continue in-person visits as allowed by the courts.

We know phone and video visits cannot replace the connection possible during in person visits. CYFD will continue to coordinate more frequent video and/or phone contacts during this time.

PULLTOGETHER.ORG

We know not every family has phone or internet access to make video calls possible. Please reach out to your caseworker if you are facing problems with technology or your connection.

We take tremendous pride with the hard work of the CYFD staff to continue providing services during this stressful and uncertain time. Again, we remain committed to reinstating in-person visits as soon as it is deemed safe to do so. If we can help you build connection in this time of crisis, or with any other supports, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Brian Blalock