



**COLORADO**

**Office of Children,  
Youth & Families**

Division of Child Welfare

Office and Division: Office of Children, Youth and Families Division of Child Welfare	Number: PM-CW-2020-0001
Program Area: Child Welfare	Issue Date: April 7, 2020
Title: Update Regarding Modification of Policy and Procedures Related to Certification and Recertification Requirements During the COVID-19 Pandemic	Office Director: Minna Castillo Cohen, M. Ed
Memo Type: Policy	Division Director: Joe Homlar
Pertinent State/Federal Statute and/or State/Federal Rule: Section 471[42 U.S.C. 671] (a) (10) Section 26-6-106, C.R.S.	Expiry Date: April 7, 2023
Outcome: During a state, county, or locally declared emergency or disaster, accommodations are applied to address barriers related to certification, recertification, and contacts with foster parents and maintains the health and safety of children/youth in foster care, foster parents, and caseworkers.	Effective Date: Immediately
Key Words: Certification, Foster Parents, Health, Structured Analysis Family Evaluation, and Support	

**Intended Recipients:** This communication has been sent to all county human/social service directors, Child Placement Agency (CPA) executive directors, and subscribers to the Office of Children, Youth and Families community partners email list who elect to receive notification when the Office issues a memo. Please forward pertinent information on to staff members as you deem necessary.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this memorandum from the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) is to provide an update on policies and procedures with conditional modifications for foster care monthly site visits and certification and recertification requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following guidance is specific to the duration of the declaration of an emergency by the Governor of Colorado due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Action:** During the pandemic, county departments and Child Placement Agencies (CPAs) may make modifications to rules identified below in order to comply with certifications and recertification rules. Modifications may only be made when they are directly related to safety concerns for foster parents, children/youth in their care, and/or the county or CPA staff in the course of their responsibilities, or medically related requirements when they are out of the control of the foster parent, county, or CPA.

**Background:** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the ability of county departments and CPAs to complete some foster care certification and recertification requirements for foster homes. These include safety concerns when making face-to-face contacts and/or interviews during the home study process, training, and medically related appointments for children/youth in the foster homes and for pets, etc. This policy memo will allow flexibility in the prescribed manner for the duration of the pandemic.

**Foster home and kinship foster home support caseworker visits during the pandemic**

County departments of human/social services (herein, counties) and CPAs are required in Sections 7.500.313 and 7.710.43.E to provide monthly in-person (face-to-face) support visits with the foster parent(s) in the foster home. There is an expectation that the support caseworker assess and assure safety and ensure that identified needs are discussed/addressed in order to maintain stability of the child(ren) in the foster home. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, counties and CPAs may, on a case by case basis, utilize video-conferencing in lieu of required monthly in-person visits in the foster home under limited circumstances.



The reason for using video-conferencing should be directly related to the health of the child/youth, foster parents, or caseworkers who would be in contact that could compromise the health of these individuals. The decision should be clearly documented in Trails in the resource contact log (counties) and/or the child file, and in the provider's record for CPAs. The method of contact with the foster parents should be determined based on what best fits their needs and the needs of the child(ren). County and CPA support caseworkers should contact the foster parent(s) and consult and collaborate as to the appropriate use of video-conferencing to maintain connections as an alternative to monthly face-to-face contact with these providers due to the pandemic.

#### **Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (S.A.F.E.)**

S.A.F.E. practitioners and their supervising authority are required to follow the home study process outlined in Sections 7.500.2.A. and 7.710.33.L. Counties and CPAs may determine local procedures regarding video-conferencing in lieu of required in-person interviews in the foster home under limited circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to interview via video-conferencing should be determined with the applicants on a case by case basis related to the health needs of all.

The reason for using video-conferencing should be directly related to the health of any child/youth, foster parents, or the workforce who would be in contact and that could compromise the health of these individuals. The decision should be clearly documented in the S.A.F.E. template for each home study. The S.A.F.E. practitioner must detail in the interview section (page 1) where the interviews were conducted and the length of time. The reason in-person interviews were not conducted in the applicant family's home should be documented in the final evaluation section of the home study. S.A.F.E. practitioners and their supervising authority are responsible for quality assessment throughout the home study process.

- The applicant (and others being interviewed) should be in sight during interviews.
- During each interview, the room should be scanned periodically to ensure the interviewed adult is alone.

The S.A.F.E. Questionnaire II (QII) must be conducted by the evaluator individually in an interview format, addressing all questions from QII while the other applicant (if applicable) is in another room and out of view or hearing range. A joint interview (if applicable) must be completed in accordance with the S.A.F.E. protocol.

A child/youth cannot be placed in the foster home without at least one face-to-face visit in the foster home, which must include an onsite inspection.

#### **Certification and Recertification Requirements**

It is an expectation that foster home certification and recertification requirements are met as outlined in the Colorado Codes of Regulations (Volume 7 rules). During this virus outbreak, counties and CPAs may include video-conferencing to support their local protocols impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as long as they are ensuring that certification requirements are met. Adding video-conferencing as a communication option should be directly related to avoiding delays in service delivery and to enhance personal safety because of the pandemic. Counties and CPAs should document the effort and appointments in Trails and CPAs should document the effort and/or appointment in the provider's record. Video-conferencing can be used in the certification process as needed to address COVID19 concerns, but prior to the finalization of certification there must be at least one visit to the home. If video-conferencing is not an option for some providers, please reach out to the Division of Child Welfare for consultation and guidance.

The Division of Child Welfare (DCW) continues to explore the direction for counties' and CPAs' practice during the COVID-19 pandemic, so please be aware that updates to this guidance may be frequent and forthcoming.

Supersedes: N/A

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