



## Colorado Office of the Child's Representative

The following is a list of activities/ideas/thoughts that we have compiled that may help you think about your cases and how to effectively advocate during these difficult times given the social distancing/quarantine restraints as well as the isolation and difficulty we all face, particularly the children/youth whose best interests you represent. Please feel free to add to our list by emailing your staff attorney and do not hesitate to reach out if you need any support.

### **Contact/Visitation ideas:**

- We encourage more frequent contact with children/youth in your cases who could benefit from extra support during this difficult time utilizing phone, text, email, video, facetime, zoom, etc.
  - o Complete any CJD Required visit (initial home visits, change of placement visits – see listserv email from Sheri Danz sent on 3/15/20 for further details about requirements and documentation)
  - o Reach out to placements/families to see what they need in order to use technology to maintain connects, facilitate “visits”/contact, etc.
  - o Advocate through DHS or CPAs to get support for families to allow this contact, including providing cell phones, internet, other devices etc. Given the current reality and how it has changed it is reasonable to expect what constitutes reasonable efforts to change and adapt as well.
- Some GALs have been doing home visits through closed doorways/windows and dropping off care packages for children/youth (e.g. coloring books, markers, crafts, books, etc.) For a limited time, Chris Henderson is allowing a GAL to do this and get reimbursement for up to \$10/child – use the “child meal” option in CARES for this reimbursement and document that it is for a visitation support package.
- Explore sibling contact, advocate to promote, offer to facilitate a zoom, facetime or three-way call.
- Identify, collaborate on, and advocate for creative ways to promote ongoing contact with parents, family members, and other important connections.
- Explore ways to do face to face visits if safe/appropriate through relatives/family/non-public spaces or in parks, etc.
- Speak with CASA and ask if they are able to facilitate video/zoom/facetime/three-way call contact with siblings/family.
- Explore allowing letters/voice recordings more frequently between siblings or family members.

### **Less Drastic Alternative/Diligent Search work:**

- Facebook mapping/messaging.
- Ask for and review search results from DHS.
- Contact DHS regarding diligent search needs/follow-up.
- Make phone calls to family members to explore options/gather additional names.

### **Investigation Ideas for addressing needs of children/youth during this time:**

Updated 03/30/2020. This is a work in progress so please send us your ideas and suggestions!

- Contact every congregate care placement or detention facility where a child/youth on your cases resides and get up to date information on their situation/plan.
- Reach out to any CASA's assigned to your cases via email/phone/zoom and exchange updates.
- Get updates/interview professionals (even though many are not at work many are available via email and phone, including teachers):
  - o Therapists,
  - o Teachers,
  - o In-home providers,
  - o Caseworkers,
  - o Visitation Supervisors,
  - o Foster parents, kin/kin-like providers, etc.;
  - o CPA case managers,
  - o Public defenders, and/or
  - o Kin/Relative caregivers.
- Offer to host mini-staffings via zoom with professionals on your case.
- Interview/touch base with parents via phone/video (with counsel permission).
- Investigate placement options through phone calls/internet research.
- Ask for and review previously videotaped visits.
- Gather/review documents that you haven't had time to review in depth (school records, assessments, etc.).
- Do legal research that you have put off such as respondents' criminal/other case history.
- ICWA Work: outline dates inquiries were made, notices were sent, responses to notices were received, etc. Identify future steps that must be made regarding ICWA.
- Independently investigate remote service options and resources to support families and placements—if there's ever a time to "think outside the box," it is now!
- Identify and advocate for supports necessary to preserve family, kinship, and foster care placements.

### **Placement Stabilization**

- Check in with placements and families about available resources and plan for online schooling
- Ensure youth has a school plan with proper supports from the district or other sources
- Staff placement resource needs with DHS or Kinship Navigators
- Discuss with caregivers what they need for support

### **Litigation/Motions**

- Prepare for and attend hearings (via phone/video whenever possible)
  - o Use coverage counsel if necessary.
- Prepare for future contested hearings:
  - o Review the case file, prep and serve judicial notice requests on court/counsel.
  - o Prepare witness and exhibit lists.
  - o Prepare trial notebooks.
  - o Review discovery/exhibits.
  - o Interview witnesses via phone/zoom.

- Draft outlines of voir dire, opening statement, witness questions/exhibits, closing arguments.

Draft any necessary motions and file/serve via email where possible – Litigation toolkit and OCR’s COVID-19 resource page will have motions for family time and sibling contact/placement shortly.