



Department of Families

Child and Youth Services Division
Child Protection Branch
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Ministère des Familles

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March 13, 2020

Dear CFS Authority CEO Partners:

Re: COVID-19

The arrival of COVID-19 in Manitoba and its impact on public services has been dynamic and evolving. I want to thank you for your professionalism and patience as we adapt to ensure the health and safety of our staff and the people we serve. Travel, social distancing and other general prevention strategies have been implemented by the province, Public Health Agency of Canada, many other organizations and Manitobans.

We have cancelled training events, including CFSIS training and all non-essential travel, which means that licensing reviews and provincial abuse investigation interviews may be delayed and rescheduled. Non-essential meetings will be rebooked, or teleconferences or Skype or other IT options will be utilized. We continue to look at all operational items, including StreetReach and the Child Abuse registry programs to determine next steps and have actioned our business continuity plans. Please know that we are updating plans and communicating to the broader child welfare sector and our own staff regularly.

The government COVID-19 [website](#) is updated regularly and I encourage you to visit it often for the most current information about the situation in Manitoba.

As Authorities that govern agencies that provide direct service, we appreciate that you are also affected. Thank you for participating in the conference call on March 12, where you outlined both the Authority and your child and family service agencies emergency contingency plans. As your agencies and Authorities implement their contingency plans, we would ask that you keep us informed to ensure good communication across the sector. As part of this strategy, we are creating an Emergency Management Team (EMT) which would be comprised of the four Authorities and the Child and Youth Services Division. The role of the EMT would be to share information and ensure all critical service delivery functions continue and, in the event of an emergency, we can work together to ensure no service delivery interruptions. We are proposing that we have a teleconference call every two to three days, depending on need. At this point the invite will go to each CEO, so if you send a delegate please ensure there is consistency in that point person. The Branch will arrange for this EMT teleconference for Monday or Tuesday next week.

Please find additional resources attached that you may find useful. We have included something on how to talk to kids about this pandemic, as this may be useful for front line staff. All documents attached have also been shared with our Community Care Partners who provide group care. We thank you for your continued efforts on:

- Hand washing
- Social distancing
- Monitoring one's health and taking necessary action if symptomatic.

Manitoba Families will continue to work closely with local health officials and other partners to monitor, gather information, assess risk and respond as new information becomes available. The EMT teleconference meeting will support these objectives.

In regards to some of today's top issues:

- Travel authorization letters for foster parents and children in care
 - Please see the email where we recommend this not occur and we are seeking a joint response
 - DECISION: if each Authority can confirm their position and any action taken on this matter.
- Hand sanitizers, gloves, other supplies
 - The province is evaluating needs based on supplies and prioritization
 - Hand washing is the best solution
- Closure of Schools and early learning child care centres
 - At this point in time both school divisions and ELCC have taken additional steps to reduce risks.
 - On March 13, the Manitoba government confirmed that schools will be closed for three weeks beginning on Monday, March 23.
- Ensuring communication and risk mitigation strategies are in place across the Province

We look forward to our teleconference early next week. Thank you for your continued efforts to reduce the spread and ensure calm during these challenging times.

Kind regards,

Signed by: LLHanson

Lorna L. Hanson
A/Executive Director
Child Protection Branch

Attachments