



COUNTY OF YOLO

Health and Human Services Agency

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Dear Resource Family Partner,

I want to thank you for your continued support of the children and families of Yolo County during these difficult times. Yolo County HHSA Child, Youth, and Family (CYF) Branch truly believes that the quality of the partnership between child-serving systems that include resource parents/families, foster family agencies, and advocacy agencies defines the degree to which we can assist the most vulnerable citizens of the community: its children.

On April 6, 2020, the Judicial Council of California's [Report to the Judicial Council](#) recommended that the Judicial Council immediately adopt eleven specific rules of the court, including Emergency Rule #6 which related to juvenile dependency proceedings. These rules were adopted and **required all California child welfare agencies to resume previously authorized visitation, pending a case-by-case review that balanced the public health directives with the best interests of the children in each case.** The rule required that the CYF Branch review each case within 5 days and notify court appointed counsel if in person visitation could not resume.

The CYF Branch reviewed each and every case in which a Yolo County dependent had been authorized to visit with a parent (or other relative), that included consideration of the following factors:

- Whether or not the child or anyone who would have proximity to the child was currently diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of COVID and/or part of a vulnerable population;
- Whether or not a reasonably safe environment was available for visitation to occur;
- Whether or not, based on age and developmental factors, the temporary suspension of in-person visitation would adversely affect parent/child bonding, the child's mental health needs, or reunification efforts; and
- Whether or not any parental safety threats had emerged that could not be mitigated by supervision of visitation.

The CYF Branch is working to implement the rules of court described above and in some cases will resume in-person visitation. The CYF Branch has actively worked with contracted visitation providers, in consultation with the County's Health Officer and Community Health Branch, to develop protocols to maximize safety and to prevent virus transmission at these in-person visitations. We have developed preliminary protocols (attached) to ensure that all participants in visitation, including children, family members, resource parents, and visitation monitors remain as safe as possible. This is based on current recommendations that all participants should be practicing universal precautions (social distancing, wearing face coverings, washing hands, etc.) to the extent that is developmentally appropriate for the child and does not interfere with parent/child bonding, breastfeeding, and/or is necessary for the parent to express emotional support for the child. We will be continuously monitoring the effectiveness of these protocols and will update them to incorporate any new information about virus transmission or other relevant factors.

I want to let you know that we have integrated feedback from resource parents into the strategies that we are utilizing to comply with our responsibilities as a child-serving agency that provides child welfare, mental health, and public health services to the children and families of Yolo County. We deeply respect and truly care about the compassionate people in our community who have opened their hearts and their homes to care for children and youth in foster care, and we are deeply committed to ensuring that we are considering the impact that these policy shifts have on your own households. Please know that there may be additional changes in policy and practice as the pandemic progresses, but that we will make our very best effort to keep you informed and to involve you in these conversations as they occur.

In partnership,



Karleen Jakowski, LMFT
Branch Director
Child, Youth, and Family Branch
Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency