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| SEAL_Revised, Brighter Letters_crop_compressed | **Commonwealth of Massachusetts** |
| ***Executive Office of Health and Human Services*** |
| **Department of Youth Services** |
| ***Modifications to Visitation Guidance and Passes Protocols during COVID 19 updated 7.1.2022*** |

This protocol establishes the guidelines and procedures that all Department of Youth Services (“DYS”) state and contracted provider residential and community staff must follow as DYS resumes providing youth the opportunities for in-person visits and passes during COVID 19. DYS reserves the right to revoke or modify this guidance and protocols at any time, if it determines that the public health and/or safety of youth and staff are at risk, or to comply with state and federal guidance.

DYS acknowledges the challenges experienced by our youth and families due to restrictions on in- person visiting procedures during the pandemic. Consistent with guidance from CDC and DPH, DYS plans to add indoor visitation options for families and/or legal guardians beginning July 1, 2022 and continue issuing passes for eligible youth.

In-person visits and passes are subject to requirements that are essential to maintain the health and safety of our visitors, youth and staff. Family engagement activities and group visits will resume at all DYS residential locations. Virtual visits will continue to occur for all youth and families as a supplement to in person visits. Professional visits that had been halted will also resume. Passes for eligible youth to leave their residential placement will be granted for activities that support their safe and effective transition back to the community. Passes will continue to be used to facilitate family re-integration, re-orientation to school/work, and as opportunities to obtain a state ID, apply for community- based programming and to initiate medical, counseling, and clinical services, as appropriate.

While the guidance in this document includes important measures and precautions to reduce the transmission of the virus, it is to be adjusted to accommodate individual circumstances to the extent reasonable with risk reduction in mind.

**IN-PERSON VISITS IN DYS RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS**

**General Requirements:**

* Visitations, unless legally required, will not be permitted with anyone who is currently under isolation because they are presumed or confirmed COVID-19 positive.
* Supervised in-person visits will be permitted in DYS approved designated spaces at each location.
* Program Management and/or facility administrators for co located settings must ensure that ventilation systems operate properly, have been serviced in accordance with manufacturer recommendations, including cleaning of filters, and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.
* The visiting space used must be visually inspected by staff prior to and immediately following each visit, to ensure that the safety and security of the space has not been compromised and/or contraband left in area. Tables and chairs must be cleaned before and after each use.
* Location Managers shall determine the total number of visitors allowed per youth during any scheduled visit based on location specifics as noted in the Residential Visitation Policy Incorporating Family Engagement Principles 03.04.04(c).

Youth who are parents may request a visit with their child. An approved family member/or legal guardian will be granted permission to bring a youth’s child to visit.

Scheduling visits will resume to its prior process with all visitors being on an approved list generated by the Program. Each site may have varied visit times to ensure that appropriate staffing levels and ratios are adhered to.

* The visitor must not be exhibiting any symptoms and are asked to stay home if they are not well. Visitors must be advised that they will be required to self-screen using a series of screening questions, and if they answer yes to any of the questions or appear ill upon arrival, their entrance will be denied. Each visitor’s information will be logged in the visiting log in addition to JJEMS as required per DYS policy 03.04.04(c) Residential Visitation Incorporating Family Engagement Principles.
* Each visitor will be asked to notify the program, should they experience COVID-19 symptoms after having participated in a visit.
* Visitors, youth and staff must continue to adhere to the vision and spirit of the DYS Policy 03.04.04(c), Residential Visitation incorporating Family Engagement Principles, in particular, sections E, regarding denial or limitations of Visits; Section F, regarding supervision requirements and conduct during visits; and Section G, regarding Safety and Security Measures.
* Staff must continue to adhere to DYS Policy 03.01.02(a), Searches in Secure Facilities (Hardware Secure) or DYS Policy 03.01.03(a) Searches in Residential Facilities (Staff Secure).
* Visits are subject to cancellation at any time per DYS policy.

**Screening for all Visitors:**

Staff and visitors will adhere to the Department of Youth Services protocols for all entry to DYS sites to gain access to the DYS approved space for visits.

*STANDARD PROCEDURE*

1. All individuals seeking admittance to the visiting space must self-screen for COVID-19 per the DYS COVID-19 Screening Protocol.

3. Once at the program location visitors will be greeted by facility personnel.

4. The facility personnel will begin by verbally asking the visitor if they have answered yes to any of the screening questions posted.

a) If the visitor’s answers are consistent with entry, the visitor will be granted access.

b) If the visitor’s answers are not consistent with entry, appears visibly unwell or refuses to self-screen, the visitor will be denied entry.

c) Any denial based on the reporting of a condition that is not consistent with entry or in the case of a visitor who refuses to self-screen or is visibly unwell, must be logged in the program operations log.

5. To self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 and/or contact with COVID-19 visitors must answer the following questions:

a) Today or in the past 24 hours, have you had any of the following symptoms?

* Fever or chills
* Cough other than what you normally experience
* Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
* Fatigue, muscle or body aches
* Headache
* Sore throat
* New loss of taste or smell
* Congestion or runny nose
* Nausea or vomiting
* Diarrhea

b) In the past 14 days, have you had close contact with a person who has tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

6. Individuals who report any of the conditions described in the self-screening questions are not allowed to visit.

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b) In the past 14 days, have you had close contact with a person who has tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

**Face Covering and Social Distancing:**

All visitors over 2 years of age are encouraged but not required to wear a face covering during the entire visit as well as during the screening procedure.

* Brief physical contact may be allowed if desired by the youth and visitor. In order to reduce risk of transmission, individuals are encouraged to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol before and after contact.

Following these precautions will help reduce the risk of transmission and protect the health and safety of everyone.

**Cleaning and Disinfecting Visitation Area Protocol:**

Any area used for visits, as well as the items in that area such as chairs and tables will be disinfected using [EPA-approved disinfectant for use against SARS-CoV-2](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2) after each visit.

**PASS FOR ELIGIBLE YOUTH TO LEAVE THEIR RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT**

Youth passes support a graduated re-entry to the community by allowing for increasing levels of self-management by the youth and promote a youth’s successful transition back to their home community. Passes also allow youth to begin to connect with resources that will support their transition and will sustain their success once they are back to their home communities.

**General Requirements**

Youth passes are governed by DYS Passes Policy #: 03.02.25(b). Youth passes will continue to be issued for eligible youth. DYS shall determine the pace of a youth’s progression from supervised ground passes at their residential programs, to supervised business passes that directly support critical risk-need areas in a youth’s service plan, and ultimately to supervised community passes and home passes based on the youth’s circumstances and the youth’s treatment plan. Employees should adhere to the DYS Safety Protocol for Home Passes for additional details.

**Youth and Staff Safety**

A youth will undergo a Wellness Check to determine if the youth is healthy to participate in passes.

* All staff will remind and encourage youth to self-assess while on a pass and to immediately inform the supervising staff or caseworker of any respiratory or cold like symptoms, such as, cough, chills, or body aches, or any change in how they physically feel.
* Prior to a home visit, the parent/legal guardian will be asked whether anyone residing or otherwise in the home during the home visit is known or suspected to have COVID-19. The parent/guardian will also be asked to provide the names and contact information for any person the youth is anticipated to come into contact while at home on a pass in case contact tracing becomes necessary.
* During the pass for a home visit, the youth, the parent/guardian, other household members, and visitors present in the home should are encouraged to follow proper care and safety practices to reduce the transmission of COVID19 this includes good hand washing hygiene.
* All youth returning from a pass will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms. All youth will follow DYS protocol on wellness checks.