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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*** |

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 as we transition from the pandemic to pre pandemic operations with some restrictions still in place. 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 has published this guidance to support indoor and outdoor visitation options for families and/or legal guardians, as well as passes for eligible youth with restrictions lessened.

DYS Family and Social events can resume in indoor spaces in accordance with the capacities for each program location and in adherence to CDC and DPH guidance

The in-person visits and passes are subject to very specific requirements that are essential to maintain the health and safety of our visitors, youth and staff. Family engagement activities and group events may resume in appropriate indoor or outdoor spaces in compliance with state and federal guidance on gatherings. (Please refer to the [Residential Congregate Care Programs 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-public-health-guidance-and-directives) issued in June 2021 and the latest CDC and MDPH guidance). Indoor family engagement group events will be determined by location on a case by case basis in conjunction with the Regional and DYS Operations leadership to ensure adherence to state and federal guidance and to factors such as adequate space and group logistics. Virtual visits will continue to occur for all youth and families as an option or supplemental to in-person visits. DYS caseworkers, DCF social workers, clergy and attorneys may continue to visit locations in accordance with the previously established protocol for those visits. For the purpose of this guidance, visitors do not include designated support workers for youth with a disability or special needs. 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 are 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 stop the spread of the virus, it is not possible to anticipate the individual circumstances of each youth and their visitors. This guidance should be adjusted to accommodate individual circumstance to the extent reasonable with risk reduction in mind.

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

**General Requirements:**

* Visitation will be restricted if the person to be visited has tested positive, is quarantining, is presumed positive or if the visitor has tested positive. Visitation will also be restricted if there is a COVID-19 outbreak at the setting. Programs should follow the guidance issued by their funding and licensing agencies regarding visitation and restrictions of all non-essential personnel [EOHHS Visitation Guidance during COVID-19](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/executive-office-of-health-and-human-services-visitation-guidance-during-covid-19).
* Supervised in- person visits will be permitted in DYS approved designated outdoor and indoor spaces at each location. If tents are used to provide the shade or shelter, they must have open sides to allow for proper airflow.
* When visits occur in an indoor approved space, programs must designate a location that ensures social distancing from other residents and staff and minimizes visitor impact on the Program space and routines of other youth. Program Management 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.
* Programs should communicate visitation guidelines to families and/or guardians and should continue to augment in-person visitation by supporting attempts by families and guardians to visit remotely using technology, including phone and video calls.
* While visitor vaccination can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, visitors **should not be required to be tested or vaccinated (or show proof of such)** as a condition of visitation.
* Visitors must wear masks at all times indoors except if fully vaccinated and visiting a fully vaccinated youth in an approved DYS visiting space. Fully vaccinated visitors may remove masks outdoors if the youth is fully vaccinated. Fully vaccinated individuals are defined as 14 days or more after their final dose. In a 2-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, the individual is fully vaccinated 14 days or more after their second dose. After a single-dose vaccine, like Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine, the individual is fully vaccinated 14 days or more after the single dose.
* Although visitation space will depend on the specific requirements of each location, youths who are fully vaccinated may visit with family who are fully vaccinated without maintaining social distancing or wearing masks, if they choose.
* 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.
* 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. Youth may visit with their child(ren) or sibling(s) who may be unvaccinated without maintaining physical distance, if both are wearing facemasks, as able.
* All visits are to be scheduled in advance with Program Management. Potential visitors will be made aware of the Department’s protocol on COVID screening and entrance to locations. Each site may have varied visit times to ensure that appropriate staffing levels and ratios are adhered to. In addition to scheduling, Program Management will be responsible for ensuring the appropriate level of supervision by staff who are knowledgeable about this visitation guidance and the guidance on basic COVID-19 safety and infection control.
* Each visitor must call the program the day of their scheduled visit to confirm they are still coming, that they are not sick and that they do not have a fever. The visitor will also be advised that they will be required to answer a series of screening questions, including questions regarding recent travel. Each visitor’s information will be logged in the visiting log as required per DYS policy 03.04.04(c) Residential Visitation Incorporating Family Engagement Principles.
* Each visitor will leave the visiting location with an informational sheet that outlines how 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 Entrance and Screening Question Protocols for all entry to DYS sites to gain access to the DYS approved space for visits. Settings should minimize points of entry when possible.

*STANDARD PROCEDURE*

1. All individuals seeking admittance to the visiting space must be screened per the DYS COVID-19 Screening Protocol.

2. Visitors arriving by personal automobile should park in one of the approved parking areas and walk directly to the Entrance. (SPE). Visitors without a car or approaching on foot should proceed directly to the entrance to be screened.

3. Once at the entrance , the visitor will be greeted by a Screener.

4. The Screener will begin by verbally reviewing the Screening Questionnaire. If the person being screened satisfactorily answers the questions asked, entrance will be granted.. The results of the questionnaire screening are to be documented in the COVID-19 sign in log.

5. Verbal screening for symptoms of COVID-19, contact with COVID-19 cases and recent travel include 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) Have you had a diagnosis of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) infection in the prior 10 days?

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

6. Individuals with any of the conditions described in the questionnaire are not allowed to visit. Additionally, any person refusing to answer the screening questions shall not be allowed to visit.

7. Facilities can encourage visitors to become vaccinated when they have the opportunity. While visitor vaccination can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, visitors should not be required to be tested or vaccinated (or show proof of such) as a condition of visitation.

**Cloth Face Covering and Social Distancing:**

* All visitors over 5 years of age are required to wear a face covering during the entire visit as well as during the screening procedure unless the cloth face covering causes difficulty breathing and/or if the visitor has a specific medical condition. The Location Manager should consider whether any accommodation can be made for the visit.
* The Facility or Program will provide each visitors who are unvaccinated with a face coveringat the entrance Both the youth and visitor must wear a face covering for the entire visit should they not be vaccinated.
* Youth and their visitors must wear a face covering, unless fully vaccinated or an accommodation has been granted by Location Manager, and they will be encouraged to maintain social distancing during visits unless both the youth and their visitors are fully vaccinated. If both youth and visitor(s) are fully vaccinated, social distancing and face masks are not required if visiting in a private,separate approved space. Chairs will be arranged to support social distancing. Visitors may not move the items in the visiting space.
* A visitor must social distance from the youth and staff member(s) to the maximum extent feasible, even if fully vaccinated, as youth and staff members may not be vaccinated.
* Following these precautions will help reduce the risk of transmission and protect the health and safety of everyone.

**Cleaning and Disinfecting Visitation Area Protocol:**

The SPE and 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 required to sign an attestation that there is no one residing or otherwise in the home during the home visit who 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 wear cloth face coverings if unvaccinated, practice social distancing and good hand washing hygiene. However, if both the youth and all members of the household are fully vaccinated, social distancing and face coverings are not required.
* All youth returning from a pass will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and fever, will shower/ change clothes and meet with the regional health services staff to assess the exposure risk and receive additional guidance. All youth will follow DYS protocol on wellness checks. You who are fully vacinnated are exempt from wearing r face coverings for 14 days. Unvaccinated you will wear face covering for 14 days. All youth regardless of vaccination status will practice social distancing and good hand hygiene, and clean and disinfect common areas after each use.