



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

COVID-19 and Child Welfare Caseworkers A Resource Guide for State Legislators

Issue Summary: Child welfare caseworkers are first responders, ensuring the safety, stability and well-being of vulnerable children and families. This already challenging job is now further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. With many jurisdictions implementing social distancing mandates, the operating environment for child welfare caseworkers has shifted.

The child welfare workforce is now investigating maltreatment, providing in-home services, responding to substance abuse crises and ensuring that visitation and reunification services are coordinated — all while minimizing the spread of COVID-19. Some jurisdictions do not have adequate gloves, masks or hand sanitizer to keep caseworkers safe during investigations and home visits.

Guidance for Legislators: During this national crisis, child welfare agencies must balance their mission to protect children from abuse and neglect with their duty to protect their workforce. Legislators can ensure they know the practice standards for their jurisdictions, establish priorities for state government through policy and funding decisions and working collaboratively with their child welfare leaders to ensure positive outcomes for children and families.

Summary of State and Federal Activity: The chart below contains federal guidance, directives and opportunities, as well as examples of how states are addressing COVID-19's impact on child welfare caseworkers. **As of April 3, no state has introduced legislation directly addressing these issues.** NCSL staff will update this information regularly, so check back often.

State Examples

Topics	Sources	Description
Child welfare workforce, substance use disorders, visitation and reunification	The Chronicle of Social Change	As the coronavirus continues to seas, the Chronicle of Social Change solicited information from stakeholders in the field of child welfare, including youth, parents, foster and adoptive parents, caseworkers, probation officers, judges and others about how the spread of coronavirus is affecting those systems' ability to function. The responses are captured in this article, Coronavirus: What Child Welfare Systems Need to Think About
Child Welfare Workforce, foster parents and private providers	Tennessee Department of Children Services	The Tennessee Department of Children Services (DCS) created a COVID-19 webpage that provides information

		specific to DCS staff, foster parents and private providers.
Child Welfare Workforce, in-home services and trail home placement home visits	Utah Department of Child and Family Services	The Utah Department of Child and Family Services developed a COVID-19 Reference Guide for their workforce in conducting child protection services.
Child welfare visitation	Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families	For child welfare visitation, DCYF staff are strongly encouraged to conduct a simple assessment prior to making home visits or having visits into the offices. The department also provided guidance for home visiting programs.

Federal Resources

Topics	Sources	Description
Child welfare workforce	Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	<p>This letter to child welfare leaders summarizes allowable practice adjustments during this pandemic.</p> <p>Highlights:</p> <p>Monthly caseworker visits can be conducted by videoconference.</p> <p>States are permitted to adjust Performance Improvement Plans (PIP), extend PIP deadlines if they make a requests 60 days prior to the initial deadline. ACF will reschedule upcoming Title IV-E eligibility reviews.</p> <p>States are required to adhere to their own protocols and timelines for contact, safety and risk assessments, and other investigation procedures.</p> <p>Delays in conducting periodic reviews and permanency hearings will not adversely affect a child’s eligibility for Title IV-E services.</p>
Child welfare workforce, foster care providers, children in foster care	Children’s Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	The Children's Bureau has COVID-19 resources for children involved in the child welfare system, foster care providers and the child welfare workforce.
Child welfare workforce	Child Welfare League of America	The Child Welfare League of America created a webpage that share tips, policies and protocols, and resources for the field of child welfare professionals and parents in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Child welfare workforce	National Association of Social Workers	The National Association of Social Workers provides guidance for social workers who are concerned about their well-being during the COVID-19 crisis.
Child welfare workforce, children and family well-being	Federal legislation	The Families First Coronavirus Response Act provides paid leave to employees, establishes free COVID-19 testing, offers protections for public health workers, and provides expanded food assistance and unemployment benefits for children and families.