

April 23, 2020

DFPS Residential Contracts

Dear Residential Contractors,

Thank you for all you are doing during this challenging time. This guidance provides an update to the direction provided on March 24, 2020 entitled Residential Contracts Updates related to COVID-19.

As a reminder, telehealth is not an option at this time for EPSDT checks. We continue to monitor the situation and work with HHSC on the issue. Below is additional information related to completion of the 3-Day Medical Exam, EPSDT/Texas Health Steps exam, and the CANS assessment. We hope this eases the administrative burden on providers so that you can continue to accept new admissions and focus on child safety during this critical time. The three parts of the 3 in 30 are being managed differently.

A. 3-Day Medical Exam

There is no change. Please continue to obtain the 3 Day Medical Exam within 3 business days of removal. This is an opportunity to have a child new to DFPS conservatorship be seen by a health care provider and for the new caregiver to have information about the child's health. These medical visits are very important.

If the medical provider contacted says that he or she cannot see a child for this purpose during the COVID-19 health crisis, the caseworker can reach out to the Well Being Specialist in your region for assistance or have the caregiver contact the Superior Member Help Line at 866-912-6283. The Help Line is available 24/7 and has options for Spanish speakers. When a new removal occurs, and the child has had significant exposure or is known positive to COVID-19 that requires quarantine or isolation at the time of removal, a telemedicine option for the 3-day medical is acceptable. These children, if clinically stable, should not be brought into a health care environment due to the risk of transmission. Please consult with STAR Health, the child's medical provider and/or the local health authority for further guidance.

B. CANS Assessment

There are telehealth options for CANS for all children in foster care. Some current CANS assessors have shifted to telehealth, so check with them first. Pathways/Mosaic is available statewide as a CANS telehealth alternative if there are no CANS assessors with whom you ordinarily work who are providing telehealth.

As a reminder, if there are concerns about the child's mental or emotional health and behavioral health services are needed, a CANS assessment is not required first. The

Superior Member Help Line (866-912-6283) can assist with locating a CANS assessor or with obtaining behavioral health services.

C. Texas Health Steps/Well Child Checks (also known as EPSDT)

As completion of an EPSDT/Texas Health Steps exam is a federal and state requirement, DFPS cannot waive it. Please attempt to identify a Texas Health Step checkup STAR Health provider continuing to provide care for children in-person. The Superior Member Help Line (866-912-6283) can assist in determining if this is an available option with a STAR Health provider.

In-person Texas Health Step checkups should be prioritized especially for newborns, infants, and young children to stay current on recommended vaccines and developmental surveillance when available through local provider capacity. While some health care providers have limited capacity to provide well visits at this time, many practices have instituted policies to maintain well visits for young children.

If routine, in-person Texas Health Steps checkups are unavailable for older youth, obtain the checkup after the crisis is concluded. As noted above, if HHSC modifies policy to allow telehealth/telemedicine options for the Texas Health Steps exam, DFPS will provide further guidance as it becomes available.

During this unprecedented time, we ask that you document your efforts in obtaining the EPSDT. This documentation is not intended to be burdensome to you or physicians. Documentation is sufficient if it provides the date of call, the name of physician contacted to obtain an EPSDT check, and that an EPSDT could not be obtained. Please maintain this in the file for those children that will have an EPSDT check pended until the time a physician becomes available.

To be clear, it is not necessary to obtain documentation from medical providers when they are unable to complete EPSDT checkups due to COVID-19. DFPS understands the significant challenge the virus poses, and will keep that in the forefront when testing for Quarter 3 remedies in June 2020. As the COVID-19 impact lessens and we get closer to the review period, we will provide information on how these assessments will be handled.

D. Dental Exams

For urgent or emergency dental issues, please continue to access dental health care as previously done, and follow dental health professional recommendations.

For ongoing routine dental checkups, the requirement for six-month healthy checks are suspended until further notice.

E. Sharing Information

We will continue to make every effort to keep you updated and to share information as we have it. We know you are committed to doing the same. Please inform your contract manager of any variance your facility may have been granted by HHSC Residential Child Care Licensing so that we can take the appropriate steps.

Thank you again for your commitment to serving children. We recognize and greatly appreciate the additional effort that is required to continue serving children and youth during this trying time. We are particularly grateful to those providers who have continued to accept new placements and quickly identified ways to quarantine youth to prevent placement moves and provide continuity of care. Please continue to let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,

Cristina R. Guerrero
Residential Contracts Director