



Unite against COVID-19

## Chief Practitioner's COVID-19 UPDATE

Dr Meegan Crawford | Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

4 January 2022

Dear parents, foster and kinship carers

I hope this email finds you and your families well.

Advice has been provided to child safety service centres (CSSCs) across the state about how to manage family contacts and meetings during this extraordinary rise in COVID infection numbers.

As I believe it is very important everyone has the same information, I wish to share this advice with you as well.

The health, safety and wellbeing of children, young people, parents, carers and child safety staff have all been considered when developing the following advice.

It is a difficult time for all Queenslanders with high rates of COVID infections and high rates of quarantine and isolation directives. I am sure someone you know or someone in your family is sick, in quarantine, or has been a close household contact. We know that some children and young people and their families have fallen ill, and it is important to make all attempts to minimise this for children, young people, families and carers.

I acknowledge the concerns and disappointments you may have around the current health situation and directives.

Please note that the below is general advice, and not specific to your child or children and the contact you have with them, or the child or children you care for. To understand how the advice relates to your situation, please contact your child safety officer or CSSC to discuss further.

### **Family contact decisions from 4th January until further notice- subject to weekly review.**

At this time we are experiencing increasing numbers of COVID infections in our community. It is hoped that short-term sacrifices will mean a return to normality as soon as possible.

It is important for children to stay connected to their family for so many reasons. For the next foreseeable period, **family contact arrangements will occur via phone or using online options such as FaceTime or Skype**, rather than face-to-face arrangements. If online options are not possible, family contact will be postponed, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Where contact happens using phone or online alternatives, our staff will consider whether more frequent contact is an option.

Where contact requires supervision, this will be made clear with both parents and carers. If you are unsure about an arrangement, please clarify this with your child safety officer or CSSC.

Where technology is to be used to support meaningful connection, and you have concerns about whether you will have enough data, whether that be for you, your child or as the carer for the child, please speak to your child safety officer about how they can assist.

### **Scheduled meetings, access to CSSCs and court attendance during January 2022**

Any meeting planned with the department will become an online meeting. If this is not possible, the meeting may have to be postponed. In making these decisions, we will consider the health, safety and wellbeing of the family, child, carers and others attending. In deciding what is the best way to meet, we will talk with you and others who were to be involved in the meeting.

Court attendance arrangements have not changed at this point, however information is changing daily.

It is the department's intention to keep CSSCs open and staff available through a staggered team approach which will mean less staff in the office on any one day, so please contact the CSSC directly if you have any questions. Please be patient if there are delays in responding to you as we transition to these arrangements.

Again, I appreciate that this information may be difficult for many people at this time.

I encourage everyone to be vaccinated and to follow safe COVID practices and hope we can resume usual family contact and business arrangements as soon as possible.

Many thanks

**Dr Meegan Crawford**

Chief Practitioner

Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

