

Coronavirus Q&A Webinar #9 with DCFS Acting Director Marc Smith
Monday, May 18, 2020 (Recording: <https://vimeo.com/414953141>)

ICOY CEO Andi Durbin:

I'm excited once again to welcome Director Marc Smith from DCFS to this call, but I have a quick housekeeping announcement before we turn it over to him. We are going to be switching from weekly calls to every other week. There will not be a call on Memorial Day. Our next call will be on June 1, then June 15 and June 29.

So now, I'm going to turn it over to Director Smith.

DCFS Acting Director Marc Smith:

Thank you! There are several updates since the last call on [May 4](#), so I'd like to touch base on them. The Department has sent out a number of letters to foster parents over the past couple of weeks. On May 13, Department sent a letter with guidance around caring for children and youth with [asthma during COVID-19](#). This letter went to every caregiver with a placement who has asthma. The guidance explains the risks regarding COVID-19 and asthma, urging them to maximize asthma controls to prevent complications of COVID-19, ensuring their children have an updated asthma action plans, and making sure all asthma medication prescriptions are filled and not expired, and encouraging them to check to confirm their healthcare provider is still available during the crisis.

On May 15, the Department sent a notice to all foster parents alerting them about [Pediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome \(PIMS\)](#), a rare but serious condition identified in recent weeks in children and adolescents with prior exposure or infections with the virus that causes COVID-19. These youth may have had asymptomatic infections or mild symptoms of COVID-19 and recovered from their acute illness. They go on to present them sometimes weeks later with a high fever of 102 or above for more than four days, associated with the combination of the following symptoms: skin rash, red cracked lips, red strawberry tongue, eye redness, abdominal pain, swelling or redness of feet and hands, swollen lymph nodes in neck, or they are in shock. These symptoms are similar to others known other known inflammatory conditions such as Kawasaki disease and toxic shock syndrome. Only a small number of children and adolescents who are infected will go on to develop PIMS.

It is believed that only youth who are predisposed to developing an overactive immune system response will develop PIMS following COVID-19. The Illinois Department of Public Health, along with other state agencies departments, have mandated that health providers report suspected cases of PIMS in order to gather data on this newly recognized illness. The letter to caregivers communicates this information and brief facts about PMS with links and resources for more information if they have questions.

DCFS has also been working on guidelines for visitation on how to manage visits the court orders them to continue in person. Those guidelines are going out this afternoon to all DCFS and POS staff. A subsequent letter explaining what to expect is going out to all caregivers.

Last week, DCFS put out a [resource guide outline](#) that includes all Departments' COVID-19 guidance on one web-based document. This resource is being updated whenever new guidelines are released and will always contain all the latest material and one place. You can access this real-time guide on the right-hand side of [DCFS' COVID-19 web page](#).

As many of you are aware, the Governor recently released a [Restore Illinois plan](#). This plan divides the state into four regions and establishes criteria for regions to move forward between five phases of the recovery of COVID-19. Currently, all regions are in Phase 2. We anticipate the regions will move to Phase 3 on May 29th.

The Department is working now on a recovery plan for DCFS and our private agency partners. This involves creating clear directions for modifying or rescinding the temporary guidance of the Department issued during the COVID-19 crisis and tying those changes to the five phases of the Restore Illinois plan.

We will continue to share more about these plans as they develop. DCFS also continues to update our online FAQs that are developed from questions put forward by ICOY members each week. Some of those questions are used to update and refine existing guidance. For example, on May 15, we updated our guidance to exposed or confirmed youth to clarify questions related to referrals to the CQC. Please continue to refer to the FAQs on our website if you have any questions regarding COVID-19 and DCFS.

As always, I want to also give you an update on the availability of protective gear. DCFS continues to work around the clock to provide protective gear to our staff and yours. DCFS continues to provide protective gear to our staff and yours, including 1.2 million gloves and over 1.2 million masks, including 200,000 youth-sized masks. We have also provided 1,600 gallons of hand sanitizer, 4,400 bottles of hospital-grade disinfectant spray, and over 2,700 bottles of disinfectant wipes. We continue to work on acquiring additional supplies every day and are in the process of working with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, and other state agencies, to put in place a long-term, sustainable PPE.

Please continue to follow established processes submitting your request to the PPE mailbox using the form provided by our procurement Department. We are responding to your requests as quickly as we can and shipping out supplies nearly every day.

Again, thank you, and I appreciate your time and support during this crisis. And without you, we would not have made as much progress as we've had and kept our children as safe and cared for as we have. Thank you.

If you have additional field-specific questions for DCFS around coronavirus, please [submit them here](#).

DCFS will hold a standing listen-only webinar **every other Monday** at 4 pm to address submitted questions and deliver updates. The next webinar will be on **Monday, June 1 at 4 pm**. [You can register for that here](#).