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Governor

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March 27, 2020

Dear Parents,

Last week, we informed you that OCFS would be suspending in person visitation between children and their parents for two weeks, at which time the protocol would be reviewed to determine next steps based on current circumstances and CDC recommendations. A decision has been made that this protocol will remain in place through the end of April. If circumstances change and OCFS can safely resume in person visits sooner, we will notify you of this change. Our family visitation partners, (HCI, AMHC and Penquis) are available to help coordinate and supervise contact. They are reaching out to families to check in regarding visitation, offer support, and facilitate and supervise visits when necessary.

We are working to provide quality contact through the use of video conferencing whenever possible. The only equipment needed is a cell phone. Free WIFI is available in many public businesses that can be accessed from outside to maintain physical distancing, for families that don't have data plans or WIFI.

OCFS is unable to provide phones, tablets or computers, or phone cards, for those that do not own one. While we are encouraged to practice physical distancing, we also encourage families to use their support network to borrow a phone to maintain this contact with their child.

We know that visitation is a vital component of the reunification process. OCFS will be reviewing cases and making plans to ensure that quality contact is occurring. The majority of our OCFS staff are working remotely. You may still reach them by phone or e-mail and we have limited staff in the office who may help direct your calls. We will have staff reaching out to all of you to verify your mailing address, phone numbers and email address, so that we may reach you as quickly as possible. Please help us keep your contact information updated.

We understand this is a very difficult time for you not be able to see your children. We are doing everything possible to keep them healthy and safe. Your caseworkers are here to help support you, please reach out to them. We thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely,

*Bobbi h. Johnson, LMSW*

Bobbi Johnson, LMSW  
Associate Director of Child Welfare  
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Office of Child and Family Services