

Protocol-New Placements of Children and Youth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This protocol accompanies the Procedure for Admitting and Relocating a Child/Youth in Exceptional Situations, and includes a revised version of the *Guide to Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones*

This Protocol is only in force during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was developed in accordance with the instructions issued by the Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) and the Government. The information on the control and prevention of COVID-19 is evolving day by day. This Protocol may be amended if additional instructions are received from the health care sector.

Mission of Valoris

- Valoris favours placement within the biological family ahead of a foster family when that option is viable.
- Our top priority is protecting the health of our resource families and of the people we support. However, it is important to remember that our primary mission is to serve the vulnerable people of Prescott-Russell. Thus, we are responsible for maintaining our offer of essential services. However, this does not mean that the organization cannot set in place any of the preventive measures or prepare for the possibility of a new placement during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The current plan was developed to address a new placement of a child or youth, and a new placement of a child or youth who has tested positive for COVID-19. This protocol identifies the steps to be taken in those situations by resource parents and staff.
- In view of the nature of our work, if someone in care displays symptoms, we are responsible for remaining with that person, making sure that we offer all the necessary care in accordance with the steps described below.

How does the virus propagate?

- COVID-19 propagates much like a flu: when someone coughs or exhales, infected liquid droplets are released. Most of those droplets land on nearby surfaces and objects, such as desks, tables or telephones. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects, and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Most people infected with COVID-19 get mild symptoms and recover. However, some get seriously ill and may need to be hospitalized. People with weakened immune systems or with diabetes, cardiac, pulmonary or other diseases are also generally more vulnerable to serious illnesses.

New placement of a child or youth:

As a preventive measure, the EOHU recommends that for every new placement, the individual be placed in isolation for 14 days following his or her admission. If the child shows symptoms or we are informed that the child was in contact with someone who has the virus, the EOHU will be contacted prior to the placement so that the child can be tested.

Protocol for 14-day isolation following the admission of a new placement (with or without flu-like signs/symptoms)

We ask all foster parents and their family members to adopt the following precautions:

Required procedures and precautions:

- workers must screen for the symptoms and potential exposure to the virus before admitting a child into a foster family;
- the child must be given a room all to himself/herself, and have the least possible amount of access to the other rooms in the house;
- if possible, a bathroom should be dedicated to the person presenting the symptoms, if not, then the bathroom should be disinfected after every use;
- gloves and a mask must be worn whenever in contact with the infected individual (respecting social distancing), and any recommended equipment;
- the mask should be worn at all times until the test results are received;
- in the case of a newborn or a young child, social distancing is not possible because they require direct care, so the recommended equipment must be worn;
- ensure that the person at all times remains hydrated and has his/her needs met;
- monitor the health of the child, youth and family members living in the home for **14 days** in order to detect any symptoms of a respiratory illness such as a cough, fever or difficulty breathing (see annexed grid) ;
- twice a day (morning and evening), for 14 days, take the temperatures of everyone living in the home;
- avoid the busier parts of the house with the child or youth, and practice social distancing in the home as much as possible;
- the child or youth is not allowed to leave the house to visit family or friends: young people can go outside but have to stay on the property and practice social distancing; and
- for the first 14 days of a new placement, ask the child or young person not to open the refrigerator, and instead ask someone to get them whatever they need.

IF THE CHILD OR YOUTH PRESENTS MINOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS: (cough, sore throat, high temperature), BUT CONTROLLED:

- NOTIFY THE WORKER AND CONSULT THE CHILD'S DOCTOR FOR THE APPROPRIATE TREATMENT. THE WORKER WILL GET IN TOUCH WITH THE EOHU.

IF THE CHILD PRESENTS THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

Difficulty breathing, high fever (102.5)

- CALL 911
- CONTACT THE WORKER OR PHONE SERVICE TO REPORT THE SITUATION.

PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES FOR PEOPLE WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19:

- follow the instructions in the previous section;
- anyone living in the home must at all times wear a mask in the home;
- anyone living in the home must wear protective glasses (or a visor) when providing care;
- anyone living in the home must wear gloves and a jacket when providing care or support to the infected person.

AFTER HAVING PROVIDED CARE TO THE PERSON:

- remove the jacket;
- toss the jacket in a trash bin with a plastic bag liner right outside the room designated for the child;
- remove the gloves;
- toss them in the trash bin with a plastic bag liner right outside the room designated for the child;
- wash hands with soap and water;
- wear gloves when washing the person's clothes and bedding (these items must be washed separately from anyone else's);
- wash hands with soap and water immediately after removing gloves;
- make sure that the laundry baskets and trash bins are lined with a plastic bag;
- wear gloves to empty bins and wash hands with soap and water right after removing them; and
- wash all dishes in the dishwasher, never by hand.

Remove your clothes at the end of the day and wash them at home with hot water. Practice **social distancing**; change daily habits to reduce as much as possible any close contact with other people, as follows:

- family members must avoid crowded areas and non-essential gatherings;
- avoid usual greetings, such as handshakes;
- limit contact with anyone who is at high risk, such as an elder and people in poor health;
- if you have to leave home for an emergency, maintain a social distance of at least two arms' lengths with others; and
- do not allow guests into the home.

Social distancing during transportation:

The following instructions are based on recommendations made by taxi companies such as Uber, Lyft, Blue Line and Capital Taxi:

- passengers must sit in the back, behind the front-passenger seat, if possible, to keep the greatest distance from the driver;
- vehicles must be disinfected before and after each trip, with products supplied by the Property Management team: be sure to first test the product on a surface that is not visible;
- be particularly vigilant when cleaning points of frequent contact such as: door handles, safety belts, the steering wheel, the stick shift and frequently used buttons (power windows, rear view mirror, heated seats, heating, air conditioning, radio, touch screen, etc.);
- leave one or two windows slightly open for proper air circulation:
 - if someone coughs during the trip, open the window once you reach your destination to fully aerate the vehicle; and
- wash your hands after each trip, preferably with soap and water.

Support provided by Valoris to foster parents

- *** daily contact with the family through their worker;**
- **24/7 emergency support;**
- **access to cleaning supplies, disinfectants;**
- **access to materials to keep the child entertained during the confinement;**
- **access to support for youth (remote counseling, socialization) by a member of our staff;**
- **access to groceries or a meal service (coordinated by Valoris);**
- **access to personal protective equipment and cleaning products;**
- **laundry services; and**
- **rate hike during the 14-day confinement period or longer in case of infection. Foster parents receive \$70 (this includes the regular per diem) per day for the 14 days of confinement. After the 14 days, foster parents receive the regular per diem again. This additional amount is only provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Practice good hygiene:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the toilet and when preparing meals:
 - use an alcohol based hand sanitizer if you do not have access to soap and water;
- when you cough or sneeze:
 - cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your arm, never your hand; and
 - immediately throw any used tissues into a trash bin lined with a plastic bag and then wash your hands; and
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you have not first washed your hands.

Cleaning:

Cleaning products can help limit the transfer of micro-organisms. Health Canada recommends using cleaners or bleach diluted in water for frequently touched surfaces such as:

- toys,
- toilets,
- electronic devices (remote controls, phones, etc.), and
- door handles, counters, taps, bedside tables.

For a new placement, the child or young person should only bring their clothes and a few (3) personal items that can be easily cleaned. When the child or youth arrives at the placement, the resource family or the residence has to disinfect and clean all of the child or youth's personal effects, no exception.

The COVID-19 pandemic new placement foster family support team.

A team of workers and a supervisor has been set up to support foster parents following the admission of a new child or youth in placement. The team consists of Chantal Chrétien (Supervisor), Julie Ladouceur and Mélanie Rochon (workers). They are responsible for contacting the foster family before the placement to go over the protocol for new admissions with them. They also look after providing support to the family during the placement.

- call the family to find out how they are doing and to answer questions related to the protocol;
- ensure that the family has all of the necessary personal protective equipment; and
- assist the family with getting groceries and essential supplies.

They work closely with the workers of the children and resources.

