



**Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Child and Family Services
2020-2024 Disaster Response and Recovery Plan
Updated SFY 2021**

Contents

INTRODUCTION..... 3

IMPLEMENTATION 4

GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS..... 4

DISASTER PLAN PROCEDURES..... 5

COVID-19 RESPONSE DISASTER PLAN UPDATE 2020 18

INTRODUCTION

Nevada is one of two states with a hybrid child welfare administrative structure. In the two largest urban counties child welfare services are state-administered and county operated. The remaining 15 rural counties are state-administered, and state operated. The Nevada Division of Child and Family Services operates under the umbrella of the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Across the county, natural and man-made disasters can disrupt or seriously disrupt the routine ways child welfare agencies operate and serve children, youth, and families. In the event of any disaster, essential child welfare agencies caring for vulnerable populations such as abused and neglected children, do what they can to prepare for natural and man-made disasters. The [Nevada Standard Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) divided the threats and hazards into varying categories.

- **Natural Categories** – this is defined as natural disaster threats such as earthquakes, canal failure, or flooding. Nevada has several fault lines running through it that have the potential to cause major damage to communities. Many areas of the state, such as Reno and Fallon, sit alongside the Truckee River that, when it exceeds flood state, causes flooding in a manner of hours.
- **Security Threats** – these are posed by international terrorism, domestic terrorism, and criminal acts.
- **Industrial Threats** – these are created by the movement of hazardous materials (HAZMAT) around the state by both truck and rail traffic. HAZMAT, utilized in mining operations throughout the state, pose a significant hazard as well.
- **Cyber Threats** – this is defined as a deliberate or malicious attempt to penetrate and disrupt computer-based information and control systems.

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 amended the requirements for a state to have a compliant Title IV-B state Plan by adding [section 422\(b\)\(16\)](#) to require that all states have in place procedures for responding to a disaster, including how the state will:

- **Criteria A:** Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster
- **Criteria B:** Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster and provide services in those cases
- **Criteria C:** Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster
- **Criteria D:** Preserve essential program records
- **Criteria E:** Coordinate services and share information with other states

Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 432.410 and 424.0367 requires a licensee that operates a foster home to develop and implement a disaster plan for the care of children in their home. Additionally, each agency which provides child welfare services is required to develop and implement a plan for the care of child.

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the DCFS State Administrator issued guidance to the regions based on the existing disaster plan and guidance from the Administration of Children and Families and other state and federal agencies. Guidance from the DCFS Administrator initially started on March 10, 2020. On March 15, 2020, in accordance with Governor Sisolak's directive, the DCFS Administrator released email guidance that the State of Nevada would immediately shut down all non-essential state offices to avoid in-person contact that could potentially spread the disease. Due to the unique aspects of the health crisis, the DCFS Administrator continues to issue guidance and updates on a routine basis. Specific guidance is referenced under each essential function. Refer to the [COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update section](#) for those updates.

IMPLEMENTATION

This plan is activated when ordered by the DCFS Administrator for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster. The plan is designed to be implemented when a disaster interferes with the day-to-day operations of child welfare agencies. Coordination between DCFS and the regions along with the various agencies under the DHHS and the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) is essential to effectively prepare and respond to disasters. Activation of this plan will end when the agency can resume its usual operating procedures or when given a new operations plan by the DCFS Administrator.

GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS

This plan is based on the following assumptions:

- The plan depends on timely communications and effective leadership
- The plan applies to all hazards and not a specific event
- The plan identifies priority services of child welfare
- The plan describes only the general emergency procedures staff will need to follow. Supervisors and Administrators may need to improvise or follow those instructions provided by state emergency management personnel to meet the specific conditions of an actual disaster
- The plan assumes DHHS will continue to operate to provide SNAP benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) grants, Medicaid, and other services
- The plan assumes that community emergency services will be in place to provide the necessities of shelter, rescue, evacuation, fire control, transportation, and any other identified basic need
- The plan assumes child welfare agencies are all participating in the DHHS or DEM emergency response system for homeland security and other types of emergencies
- The plan focuses on the unique responsibilities of child welfare agencies for foster children in foster family homes, residential facilities in state or out-of-state including those children with special needs, and detention facilities for children
- The plan assumes staff and supervisors will be informed and trained on how to implement emergency procedures when disasters strike

DISASTER PLAN PROCEDURES

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>CWS Disaster Response Criteria A:</p> | <p>Identify, locate, and continue availability of services, including a plan for providing temporary shelter for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster</p> |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p>Identification and location process of children who may be displaced</p> |
| <p>Process Description:</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All social workers/caseworkers or designee with an assigned caseload will contact the caregivers/foster homes on their assigned caseloads via telephone and/or home visits to identify and locate children who are displaced as a result of the disaster or emergency as well as assess client needs (foster parents may call caseworkers first however needs assessment and location must still be ascertained). • All social workers/caseworkers or designee with an assigned caseload will contact those youth living independently but still under the jurisdiction of the State via telephone and/or home visits to identify and locate youth who are displaced because of the disaster/emergency as well as assess needs (youth may call caseworkers first however needs assessment and location must still be ascertained). • If social workers/caseworkers are unable to reach the home by telephone, a visit will be required (if safe to do so) to determine the safety status of the child/children and the home. • All social workers/caseworkers or designee, with an assigned caseload will report to the respective manager or designee the status, location, and any special needs of each child on their caseload, who are living in an area affected by the disaster/emergency. • The manager or designee will report this information to their respective agency administrator or designee. • All social workers/caseworkers or designee, with an assigned caseload will document in UNITY (or on paper if necessary) all delays and postponements of case plan required activities, child and parent visits, court hearings, administrative reviews, etc. for those children affected by the disaster/emergency. |
| <p>Process Description</p> | <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCFS Administrator or designee will maintain contact with their respective agency managers or designee to ensure children under child welfare care and custody who are affected by the disaster/emergency are located, safe |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| | <p>or for those children who cannot be located, are reported to DEM, American Red Cross and/or law enforcement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPO staff may be assigned to assist with locating children. • In the event any agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster, the DCFS Administrator or designee will provide the information to the DEM. This scenario assumes that all regions (Washoe, Rural, or Clark) will have declared a state of emergency. |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Communication and Coordination of Services with Caregivers/Foster Homes</p> |
| <p>Process Description:</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All caregivers/foster homes will have on file a home disaster plan which identifies alternative locations in the event of a need for evacuation. Included in the disaster plan is a telephone number identified for foster parents who are to call to check in with their respective child welfare agency as soon after a disaster as possible (in the event the child welfare agency has not already been in contact). • Caregivers/foster homes are required to be knowledgeable about the disaster plans for schools in which children in their care are enrolled. • Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) 424.615 requires the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The manner in which to evacuate the foster home and the designation of an alternate location where the members of the foster home, including, without limitation, any child with a disability or special medical needs, may reside during an evacuation. ○ The manner in which an evacuation will proceed if a child is at school or otherwise away from the foster home, and a description of the plan for any such child. ○ A list of important telephone numbers, including, without limitation, alternate telephone numbers for the licensing authority, the staff of the foster home and an agency which provides child welfare services or other agency or person who has placed a child in the foster home. ○ A plan for communicating before, during and after an evacuation, if possible, with any person or entity having physical custody of a child in the foster home. ○ A description of the manner in which the licensee will receive information from emergency management personnel, and the manner in which the licensee or staff will coordinate with emergency personnel and juvenile courts, as required. ○ A list of critical items to take, if possible, when evacuating the foster home, including, without limitation, medication, medical cards, and |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | <p>medically necessary equipment for any child with a disability or special medical needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A description of the manner in which the licensee will make services available to children in the foster home to address the emotional impact of the emergency. <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child welfare administrators or designees will maintain contact with their respective managers to ensure that the communication process for families with children under child welfare care and custody has been maintained. • All ICPC placements in the state will be checked for the child’s safety and location. As soon as reasonably possible, the ICPC Deputy Compact Administrator (DCA) for the state that placed the child will be notified of the child’s safety and status. • In the event an agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster, the DCFS Administrator or designee will obtain the contact list from the affected jurisdiction and may assign staff to assist in making contact. • In the event an agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster, the DCFS Administrator or designee will provide all information to the DEM. This scenario assumes that the affected region (Washoe, Rural, or Clark) will have declared a state of emergency and has requested assistance from the state emergency services. |
| Essential Function | Identification of evacuation procedures |
| Process Description: | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers/foster homes receive training on emergency management procedures for earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters. Emergency preparedness is part of the foster parent training process. • Children in foster care will evacuate with caregivers/foster parents according to direction by emergency officials. A primary “shelter in place” modality is taught to all foster parents during training. • Evacuation may not always be to a designated shelter but may be to a predetermined location with friends, relatives, etc. These locations should be included in foster home disaster plans and updated accordingly. • All social workers/caseworkers or designee with an assigned caseload will contact the caregivers/foster homes on their assigned caseloads via telephone if possible, to identify and locate children who may need to be |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | <p>relocated due to a disaster/emergency. Foster parents may call caseworkers first however needs assessment must still be ascertained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medically fragile children will be prioritized in the event of a disaster/emergency, to ensure that calls or visits can be made to check the wellbeing and safety as well and to determine if relocation is necessary. <p><u>FPO Office:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCFS Administrator or designee will maintain contact with the regions to ensure children under child welfare care and custody are located and safe. For those children who need to be relocated, regions will ensure that transportation is available via foster families, facilities, or staff. If additional support is needed, a report is made to DEM, American Red Cross, and/or law enforcement. • FPO staff may assist in making telephone contact and/or visits when necessary and safe to do so. • In the event an agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their care and custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster, the DCFS Administrator or designee will provide all information to the DEM. This scenario assumes that the affected region (Washoe, Rural, or Clark) will have declared a state of emergency and has requested assistance from the state emergency services. |
| Essential Function | Parental notification procedures |
| Process Description: | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of children in the affected area and known to live out of state will be notified by the child’s social worker/caseworker or designee of the child’s status and location, if appropriate to do so. • Parent contact is documented in UNITY. • Coordination will be made with mental health crisis teams if a parental contact includes notice of a death of a child. • Parents will be informed of other disaster related services such as those offered by American Red Cross, Salvation Army, State Mental Health Services, etc. if appropriate to do so. • See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DCFS Administrator or designee will maintain contact with their respective manager to ensure parental contacts have been made as necessary and appropriate. |

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPO staff may assist offices as necessary in making telephone contact when necessary and appropriate to do so. • In the event an agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their care and custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster or emergency, the DCFS Administrator or designee will provide the information to the DEM. This scenario assumes that the affected region (Washoe, Rural, or Clark) will have declared a state of emergency and has requested assistance from the state emergency services. |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p>Alternative processes for providing continued services</p> |
| <p>Process Description:</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration of the following services is essential and takes precedence over any other services or functions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hotline Services. ○ Investigations: ability to investigate reports of abuse and neglect and place children in safe out of home living arrangements if needed. ○ Ensure safety of children who are wards placed in out of home care and focus on children with special needs and dependent on technology (i.e. wheelchairs, respirators, sight impaired, etc.). ○ Execute consents for children in care (i.e., emergency surgery). ○ Payment to caregivers. • See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 |
| | <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DCFS Administrator or designee will work with the affected regions and/or state emergency services to assist in the restoration of services and functions in a rank order of importance and as quickly as possible. • The DCFS administrator or designee will maintain contact with administrators or designees of other Health and Human Services divisions to determine status of other services and will advise child welfare regions accordingly. |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p align="center">Staff assignment process</p> |
| <p>Process Description:</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees will be contacted to ensure their own safety by phone, text, or email as appropriate. • Employees will be contacted on their phone and/or by email to report to a modified work site if appropriate. • Staff in the unaffected areas will provide relief and reinforcement as needed to the affected areas and work under the direction of their specified manager or designee for the affected area as well as continuing to provide day-to-day case management for their on-going caseloads. • The restoration of child welfare services is prioritized and communicated to employees working during or after a disaster in the most expeditious manner possible. • The specific manager of the state or county or designee will determine the staff reporting stations based on direction from the DCFS Administrator or designee. |
| | <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees will be contacted to ensure their safety by phone, text, or email as appropriate. • Employees will be contacted on their phone and/or by email to report to a modified work site if appropriate. • Staff in the unaffected areas will provide relief and reinforcement as needed to the affected areas and work under the direction of the DCFS Administrator or designee for the affected area. |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p align="center">Workload planning</p> |
| <p>Process Description:</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations will return to regular work hours and functions as soon as possible. The priority for restoring services is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hotline Services. ○ Investigations---ability to investigate reports of abuse and neglect and place children in safe out of home living arrangements if needed. ○ Ensure safety of children who are wards placed out of home care and focus on children with special needs and dependent on technology (i.e. wheelchairs, respirators, sight impaired, etc.). ○ Execute consents for children in our care (i.e., emergency surgery) |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Payment to caregivers. ● As available and appropriate, supervisory staff will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide backup to line staff. ○ Report to their respective manager or designee at least once a day if not more frequently depending on the situation. ○ Make sure staff working in the disaster/emergency area are debriefed regularly. ○ Monitor extremely serious cases. ● Social workers/case workers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide on-going case management for current caseloads; and, ● Respond to new cases on a prioritized basis with the assistance of workers from unaffected areas or other counties. ● Support staff can assist with many job functions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist with phone calls to verify location of children or hotline coverage. ○ Assist with in person verification and location of children if phone lines are inoperable. ○ Assist in locating appropriate foster homes or facilities for emergency placements. ○ Assist in coordinating background checks for available emergency placements. ● See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FPO staff may assist affected areas and work under the direction of the DCFS Administrator or designee. |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Alternative locations for operations</p> |
| <p>Process Description</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The regions will communicate any alternate worksites to the DCFS Administrator or designee. ● See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At the direction of the DCFS Administrator or designees, FPO managers and supervisors are responsible for directing their staff and communicating with them prior, during and after a disaster/emergency including directing them to alternative work sites. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Essential Function | Orientation and ongoing training/exercise |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State, County, and FPO Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training will be provided locally for practicing elements of the disaster plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducting annual drills and documenting results. ○ Displaying evacuation routes and exits. ○ Knowledge of the location of fire alarms, fire extinguishers, etc. ○ Offering staff first aid and CPR. ○ Knowing the signs of stress and timeout related to emergencies. • See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 |
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria B: | Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases |
| Essential Function | New child welfare investigation process |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations will continue per existing policy and procedures unless alternative state or federal guidance provided. • Alternate staff may be used to handle hotline calls, as needed. • Calls to the hotline or in person requests for services will be met in order of need (i.e. physical or life-threatening need first). • Staff that do not provide an essential function may be assigned to support roles in notifying families, transporting children, or other functions involved in the investigation process when safe and appropriate to do so. • See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPO staff will assist all offices as necessary and available to ensure services and functions are restored. |
| Essential Function | Implementation process for providing new services |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations will continue per existing policy and procedures unless alternative state or federal guidance provided. • Alternate staff may be used to handle hotline calls, as needed. |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In calls to the hotline or in person requests for services will be met in order of need (i.e. physical or life-threatening need first). • The regions will prioritize their response and service delivery based upon the severity of needs and provide the plan to the DCFS Administrator or designee. • Staff that do not provide an essential function will be assigned to support roles in notifying families or transporting children or other functions involved in the investigation process. • See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPO staff may assist all offices as necessary and available to ensure services and functions are restored. • The DCFS Administrator or designee will work with the affected regions and/or state emergency services to assist in the restoration of services and functions in a rank order of importance and as quickly as possible. |
| <p>CWS Disaster Response Criteria C:</p> | <p>Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster</p> |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p>Communication with Child Welfare Personnel</p> |
| <p>Process Description</p> | <p><u>All State, County and FPO Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in the field are to follow the safest course of action and then call in their location at the earliest time possible. • As soon as practical, the employee’s manager or designee will follow up to locate and communicate with personnel who have not been accounted for at the work site locations. • An all staff email will be sent with instruction and information updates for those with Internet access. • See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 |
| <p>Essential Function</p> | <p>Communication with Contracted Services</p> |
| <p>Process Description:</p> | <p><u>All State and County Offices:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment providers and vendors will be contacted with further instructions if they have children in care. • Providers who provide mental health services may be called in to provide emergency crisis care. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to providing services, contractors provide an emergency plan which includes emergency contacts and organizational chart for their facility which are reviewed by licensing or funding agency to ensure communication processes are in place. <p>FPO Office:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the direction of the DCFS Administrator or designee, FPO staff may assist all offices in the communication with contracted vendors and providers. |
| Essential Function | Communication process when normal communications are unavailable |
| Process Description: | <p><u>All State, County and FPO Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DCFS Administrator or designee will collaborate with the regions to assess any communication issues and develop a plan to address such issues. When communications are unavailable, each agency will rely on the DEM/EOC, the National Guard and/or the American Red Cross hotline numbers for communication. <p>See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020</p> |
| Essential Function | Communication with Media |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State, County and FPO Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Information officer for all division directors will collaborate to deliver public messages to media. Staff are not to discuss activities with individuals working in the media and are advised to direct them to the DHHS Director or the Public Information Officer (PIO). |
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria D: | Preserve Essential Program Records |
| Essential Function | Record preservation process |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State, County and FPO Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During a disaster or emergency, the file room will be locked and monitored by file room staff as available. Staff will secure paper copy files in place or by bringing files to the file room maintaining as much security of confidential information as possible. |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program records (license files, medical information, case notes, legal documents, forms) and related information are maintained electronically in the Statewide Child Welfare Information System (UNITY). |
| Essential Function | Use of off-site back up system |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State, County and FPO Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child welfare data is backed up at the State IT Department and locally daily. Program records (license files, medical information, case notes, legal documents, forms) and related information are maintained electronically in the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (UNITY). The disaster plan is coordinated with IMS so that electronic information is preserved and available in case of electrical outage, destruction of property, etc. |
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria E: | Coordinate services and share information with other states |
| Essential Function | Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process |
| Process Description | <p><u>FPO Office:</u> Nevada Deputy Compact Administrator (DCA) or designee will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify children in the geographic area affected by the disaster or emergency. Contact the local office responsible for the supervision of the child's placement. Obtain information about the child's location and condition. Notify the sending state's DCA about the child's location and condition. Document any collected information on paper forms (if NIECE is unavailable) about the child and send it to the sending state's DCA when phone service or other services are restored. In the event an agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster or emergency, the DCFS Administrator or designee will work with the affected counties and/or state emergency services to assist in the location of children in county custody located out of state. See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Essential Function | Mental Health Providers |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical services may be provided as available from DCFS Children’s Mental Health and/or the Division of Public and Behavioral Health. See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available FPO staff may assist all offices affected by a disaster/emergency with locating mental health services for children as needed. In the event an agency which provides child welfare services is unable to continue to provide services to children in their custody due to being overwhelmed by a disaster or emergency, the DCFS Administrator or designee will work with the affected counties and/or state emergency services to assist in the location of necessary mental health services. |
| Essential Function | Courts |
| Process Description: | <p><u>All State and County Offices and FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DCFS Administrator or designee will collaborate and coordinate with Court Improvement Program of needed revisions to judicial processes. See COVID-19 Response Disaster Plan Update 2020 |
| Essential Function | Federal Partners |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State and County Offices and FPO Office</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DCFS Administrator or designee will interact with federal partners as necessary to ensure updates regarding the status of State children and programs in areas affected by a disaster/emergency. |
| Essential Function | Tribes |
| Process Description | <p><u>All State and County Offices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tribes in all counties of Nevada are sovereign nations who work with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) staff and Bureau of the Interior (BOI). Any ICWA children in placement will have available the same services as any other child. Tribes will be contacted if they are identified as the guardian of the child or if a child has been placed on tribal land through an established MOU. <p><u>FPO Office</u></p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The DCFS FPO ICWA Specialist or designee will maintain contact with the Tribes as appropriate and necessary.• The DCFS FPO ICWA Specialist or designee will assist with ICWA cases as appropriate. |
|--|---|

Intentionally left blank

COVID-19 RESPONSE DISASTER PLAN UPDATE 2020

Modifications had to be made to the plan due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic impacted several key operations regarding child welfare in the State of Nevada. The modifications were instituted to maintain services to the children and families within our state. It should be noted that at the time of this update state agencies remained closed with a progressive plan to slowly reopen offices. Due to the unique aspects of the national health emergency and the volume of guidance provided to child welfare agencies, this update is specific to the COVID-19.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared a global emergency classified as a global pandemic in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.ⁱ A pandemic by definition is an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population.ⁱⁱ

On March 12, 2020, Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak issued a Declaration of Emergencyⁱⁱⁱ in response of the global infectious disease pandemic designated by the National Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as COVID-19. COVID-19 is a highly infectious coronavirus that aggressively attacks the respiratory system of its victims. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about six (6) feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, face or eyes.^{iv}

On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States of America declared a national emergency in response to the escalating crisis.^v

On March 17, 2020, Nevada Governor Sisolak ordered statewide closure of all gaming entities in order to help contain the virus. These were unprecedented steps that Nevada was initiating. This was a rapidly evolving emergency that had never been faced on this scale.^{vi}

The pandemic is causing enormous economic strains and nationwide shortages of vital resources such as soaps and sanitizers as well Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g., medical masks, gloves. This greatly impacted our direct service staff, especially those in the field. This compromised the safety and security of not just child welfare workers but the numerous children and families that we serve on a day to day basis. All state, county and local jurisdiction agencies were dramatically impacted. Employees designated as “non-essential” were transitioned to telecommuting so that the continuity of government services could continue while at the same time helping mitigate the spread of the disease.^{vii} While there were struggles with the capacity to support staff in transitioning to telecommuting, the agencies prioritized remote access to systems based upon staff essential functions and safety of children. Some essential staff continued to work from offices to provide critical services such as hotline and investigations.

Nevada entered a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) on November 1, 2019. On May 8, 2020, the Children’s Bureau approved a Revised Measurement Plan for a one quarter extension for case reviews due to the national COVID-19 emergency. Therefore, State Rating Summary data reflects

only two quarters of reviews instead of three quarters; the Q3 review was rescheduled to Q4. As a result of COVID-19, the state is working collaboratively with its regional partners and CB to develop procedures to conduct virtual case reviews.

The existing disaster plan did not specifically address a global pandemic. Based on the magnitude of the crisis and the communicable nature of COVID-19 specific containment steps had to be updated and incorporated into the disaster plan. The following table reflects updates and additions (as of May 20, 2020) to the disaster plan to meet the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. In the upcoming year, the state will need to assess the impact of the pandemic and make modifications to the disaster plan, as necessary.

| | |
|--|--|
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria A: | Identify, locate, and continue availability of services, including a plan for providing temporary shelter for children under State care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster |
| Essential Function | Identification and location process of children who may be displaced |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child welfare agencies have an obligation to ascertain the status of youth in court jurisdiction or independent living programs that may be affected due to closures of college campuses or disruption to other placement situations.^{viii} |
| Essential Function | Communication process with Caregivers/Foster Homes |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure parents, caregivers and youth have access to technology such as cell phones, tablets, or computers with internet access to participate in caseworker contacts and maintain important familial connections.^{ix} |
| Essential Function | Identification of evacuation procedures |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No updates |
| Essential Function | Parental notification procedures |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 Resource Guide available to be given to parents, if appropriate to do so.^x Connect families to needed assistance or resources.^{xi} |
| Essential Function | Alternative processes for providing continued services |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| <p>Guidance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Bureau urges child welfare agencies to be in touch with their governor and to work with emergency management and public health leadership to have child welfare workers and service providers classified as Level 1 emergency responders and thus, have greater access to PPE.^{xii} • Local jurisdictions encouraged to consult their legal counsel. In order for DCFS to track jurisdictional modifications to current practice through this crisis, FPO requests copies of all policies, procedures, instructional memoranda, or other communications to CW staff, and requests jurisdiction permission to share modified operations with other jurisdictions to facilitate practice improvement.^{xiii} • Local jurisdictions encouraged to connect with Public Health Preparedness Team to coordinate with State of Nevada Emergency Operations Center for resources and contact FPO with statutory, regulatory or policy concerns or deviations.^{xiv} • State offices closed to the public and in-person public services transitioned to services online and over the phone.^{xv} • Section 424(f)(2)(A) of the Act requires that each state must ensure that not less than 50 percent of the total number of monthly caseworker visits during a federal fiscal year occur in the residence of the child. The Children’s Bureau identified that during the major disaster period, the Title IV-E agency may include the monthly caseworker visits that occur by means of videoconferencing as “in the child’s residence” for meeting the requirement in §424(f)(2)(A) of the Act.^{xvi} • The monthly caseworker visit requirement remains in place, but policy is modified to permit such visits to be conducted by videoconferencing in these extraordinary circumstances.^{xvii} • Staff are to wear masks and other PPE as necessary and available during home visits. Any video-based meetings will be documented in the UNITY system with explanations why they were carried out in this manner. ^{xviii} • When in person contact is required, utilize screening questions prior to visits. Staff should use social distancing and stay six feet away from all individuals when possible, refrain from touching anything in the home, and use PPE. Consider talking to family members outside to minimize time spent inside the home.^{xix} • In response to the COVID-19 emergency, the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services will take an approach to maximize safety while minimizing service disruption. Accomplish this by: 1) Maximizing Telehealth, 2) Minimize office exposure by maximizing telecommuting and staggering shifts when necessary, 3) Monitor facility staff at five state facilities, 4) Keep communication lines open with community providers to assist as needed, 5) Create easy ways for staff to report concerns, request COVID-related leave |
|------------------------|---|

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| | <p>or flexibility requests, and 6) Use online collaboration tools to continue to make progress on systems improvement.^{xx}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every effort should be made to incorporate phone or video-conferencing visits if in-person family visits are not feasible or safe. Cases should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. • Community Mental Health Services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expanded telehealth delivery utilizing various platforms. Most Medical services can be delivered via telehealth except for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR), Basic Skills Training (BST), Group therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy and medical services which require direct contact with the patient. Telehealth should be utilized when possible to minimize the risk of both patients and providers.^{xxi} ○ Mobile Crisis shifted to telehealth services in most circumstances, or face-to-face abiding by CDC guidance and utilization of PPE.^{xxii} • Residential Mental Health Services.^{xxiii} <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-person visits for youth in the programs suspended with increased options for video or telephonic visits. ○ Teletherapy was instituted and school delivered remotely. |
| Essential Function | Staff assignment process |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No update |
| Essential Function | Workload planning |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies may utilize federal funds for purchasing cell phones and PPE.^{xxiv} • During the major disaster period, the Title IV-E agency may include the monthly caseworker visits that occur by means of videoconferencing as “in the child’s residence” for meeting the requirement of the Stafford Flexibility Act.^{xxv} |
| Essential Function | Alternative locations for operations |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nevada Governor ordered no congregating in public places, extend declarations of emergency, and issued a stay at home order.^{xxvi} • Following White House opening guidelines, return to work in phases, encourage telework, close common areas, minimize non-essential travel and schools may remained closed.^{xxvii} |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize telecommuting to minimize office exposure and utilize staggered shifts when necessary.^{xxviii} |
| Essential Function | Orientation and ongoing training/exercise |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide resources for employees' behavioral health^{xxix} and ways to manage stress.^{xxx} While working through the immediate crisis, begin planning for recovery and identifying lessons learned for enhanced planning and preparedness for future disasters. Agencies encouraged to plan for potential lingering negative budgetary effects on the agency.^{xxxi} Use online collaboration tools to continue to make progress on systems improvement for Nevada's future.^{xxxii} Provide resources to parents on how to talk to children, offered by the Nevada Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) website. Make available to employees, information about and tips for social distancing, quarantine, and isolation.^{xxxiii} |
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria B: | Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases |
| Essential Function | New child welfare investigation process |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Bureau advised that states would be left to determine their own protocols so long as the guidelines are met.^{xxxiv} Initial face to face contact with children and families to assess for safety by the assigned investigating staff must continue with no deviation from the in-person requirements but response times were adjusted as follows:^{xxxv} <ul style="list-style-type: none"> P1 – Modified to 6-hour response time. P2 – No change and stands at 24-hour response time. P3 – Modified to 7 calendar days. Face-to-face contact should utilize CDC guidelines and PPE to risk to all parties.^{xxxvi} For required home visits, staff should call the family before going to the home and use screening questions.^{xxxvii} Every effort should be made to incorporate phone or video-conferencing visits if in-person family visits are not feasible or safe. Cases should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Children’s Bureau, using the Stafford Flexibility Act,^{xxxviii} identified modifications to the fingerprint-based criminal record check requirements of §471(a)(20)(A), (C), and (D) of the Social Security Act. During the major disaster period, a Title IV-E agency that wishes to exercise this flexibility must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct all available name-based criminal background checks for prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, legal guardians, and adults working in childcare institutions, and Complete the fingerprint-based checks of NCID pursuant to §471(a)(20)(A), (C), and (D) of the Act as soon as it can safely do so, in situations where only name-based checks were completed. |
| Essential Function | Implementation process for providing new services |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face contact should adhere to CDC guidelines and PPE to reduce risk to all parties.^{xxxix} Every effort should be made to incorporate phone or video-conferencing visits if in-person family visits are not feasible or safe. Cases should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. |
| WS Disaster Response Criteria C: | Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster |
| Essential Function | Communication Structure: Child Welfare Personnel |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To track jurisdictional modifications to current practice through this crisis, the DCFS FPO requests copies of all policies, procedures, instructional memoranda, or other communications to child welfare staff, and requests jurisdiction permission to share modified operations with the other jurisdictions to facilitate practice improvement.^{xi} |
| Essential Function | Communication Structure: Contracted Services |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Updates |
| Essential Function | Communication process when normal communications are unavailable |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with supervisor via email or phone pertaining to any needed modifications to standard policy and procedure.^{xii} |

| | |
|--|--|
| Essential Function | Communication with media |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Updates |
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria D: | Preserve Essential Program Records |
| Essential Function | Record preservation process |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Updates |
| Essential Function | Use of off-site back up system |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Updates |
| CWS Disaster Response Criteria E: | Coordinate services and share information with other states |
| Essential Function | Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Administrators for the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children provides information on individual state travel restrictions. • Implemented changes to monthly visitation of children per state and federal guidance including allowing for virtual visitation.^{xlii} • ICPC travel not suspended and regions requested to continue with ICPC activities provided the partnering states are cooperating and the activities are in the best interest of the child.^{xliii} <p>Home studies may still be completed in person using proper hygiene and social distancing.^{xliv}</p> |
| Essential Function | Courts |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child welfare workers to attend child welfare court proceedings via videoconference and/or telephonically.^{xlv} • Court Improvement Programs (CIPs) across the country provide critical support for efforts to ensure children’s safety and well-being, and to protect constitutional rights. Examples include: |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purchasing technology to allow hearings to continue remotely. ○ Working to develop protocols for remote hearings. ○ Providing remote training to judges, court administrators and clerks on how best to use technology platforms. ○ Coordinating COVID-19 responses with child welfare agencies. ○ Providing remote training to attorneys for children, parents, and the child welfare agency on how best to use technology platforms to communicate with their clients and participate in hearings and reviews. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working to develop or improve e-filing systems.^{xlvi} |
| Essential Function | Tribes |
| Guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No Updates |

Intentionally left blank

-
- ⁱ World Health Organization. (2020). *Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>
- ⁱⁱ Merriam-Webster. (2020). *Dictionary Pandemic*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pandemic>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Sisolak, Steve. State of Nevada Executive Department. (March 22, 2020). *Declaration of Emergency Directive 006*. Nevada.
- ^{iv} Clark County (March 13, 2020). *Guide to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)*. Nevada.
- ^v Trump, Donald J. The White House. *Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>
- ^{vi} Sisolak, Steve. State of Nevada Executive Department. (March 18, 2020). *Declaration of Emergency Directive 003*. Nevada.
- ^{vii} Sisolak, Steve. State of Nevada Executive Department. (March 18, 2020). *Declaration of Emergency Directive 006*. Nevada.
- ^{viii} Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- ^{ix} Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (March 27, 2020). *Letter to child welfare legal and judicial leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- ^x Cortez Masto, Catherine. United States Senate. (2020). *Covid-19 Resource Guide*. Nevada.
- ^{xi} Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- ^{xii} Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (April 17, 2020). *Letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- ^{xiii} Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- ^{xiv} Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- ^{xv} Sisolak, Steve. State of Nevada Executive Department. (March 18, 2020). *Declaration of Emergency Directive 006*. Nevada.
- ^{xvi} Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (April 15, 2020). *Letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- ^{xvii} Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (March 18, 2020). *COVID-19 letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- ^{xviii} Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- ^{xix} Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- ^{xx} Nevada Division of Child and Family Services. (2020). *Agency Response to COVID-19 Infographic*. Nevada.
- ^{xxi} Bierman, Suzanne. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Care Financing and Policy. (March 17, 2020). *Telehealth Services Memorandum*. Nevada.
- ^{xxii} Division of Children and Family Services. (May 1, 2020). *COVID-19 Recovery Framework*. Nevada.
- ^{xxiii} Division of Children and Family Services. (May 1, 2020). *COVID-19 Recovery Framework*. Nevada.
- ^{xxiv} Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (April 17, 2020). *Letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- ^{xxv} Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (April 15, 2020). *Letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- ^{xxvi} Sisolak, Steve. State of Nevada Executive Department. (March 31, 2020). *Declaration of Emergency Directive 010*. Nevada.
- ^{xxvii} Sisolak, Steve. State of Nevada Executive Department. (April 21, 2020). *COVID-19 Nevada Update*. Nevada.
- ^{xxviii} Nevada Division of Child and Family Services. (2020). *Agency Response to COVID-19 Infographic*. Nevada.

-
- xxix Nevada Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). *Resources for Coping and Managing During Covid-19*. Nevada.
- xxx Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *Taking Care of Yourself: Tips for social distancing, quarantine and isolation during an infectious disease outbreak*. (HHS Publication No. SMA14-4885). United States of America.
- xxxi Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- xxxii Nevada Division of Child and Family Services. (2020). *Agency Response to COVID-19 Infographic*. Nevada.
- xxxiii Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *Taking Care of Yourself: Tips for social distancing, quarantine and isolation during an infectious disease outbreak*. (HHS Publication No. SMA14-4885). United States of America.
- xxxiv Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (March 18, 2020). *COVID-19 letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- xxxv Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- xxxvi Division of Children and Family Services. (May 1, 2020). *COVID-19 Recovery Framework*. Nevada.
- xxxvii Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- xxxviii Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (April 15, 2020). *Letter to child welfare leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- xxxix Division of Children and Family Services. (May 1, 2020). *COVID-19 Recovery Framework*. Nevada.
- xl Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (May 14, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #4*. Nevada.
- xli Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (May 14, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #4*. Nevada.
- xlii Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (March 17, 2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #1*. Nevada.
- xliii Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #2*. Nevada.
- xliv Armstrong, Ross. Division of Child and Family Services. (2020). *Instructional Memo: COVID-19 Guidance Memo #2*. Nevada.
- xlv Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (March 27, 2020). *Letter to child welfare legal and judicial leaders*. Washington, D.C.
- xlvi Milner, Jerry. Administration for Children and Families. (April 14, 2020). *Letter to chief justices and state court administrators*. Washington, D.C.