

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SECRETARY LAURA HOWARD
FOSTER CARE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE - AUGUST 25, 2020





DCF SERVICE DELIVERY



DCF service centers closed to the public on March 23



Staff began teleworking full-time using virtual tools on Monday, April 6



Offices began reopening to the public on June 8 with social distancing and public health guidelines in place



DCF SERVICE DELIVERY

Maintained essential program and licensing staff during state office closure:

- The KPRC continued to operate and take reports of abuse/neglect
- CPS and APS workers continued to receive and respond to abuse reports
- Foster care operations continued
- Eligibility workers continued to process food, cash, LIEAP and child care assistance applications
- Disability Determination Services continued



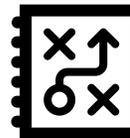
DCF SERVICE DELIVERY



All programs have implemented screening questions recommended by KDHE before in-person visits in a home, community or residential facility



DCF has maintained contact with grantees/stakeholders to ensure continuity of operations



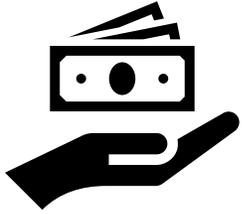
All foster care case management grantees submitted Continuity of Operations Plans



DCF SERVICE DELIVERY



- DCF fingerprinting services were paused from March through June, but DCF continued to process any fingerprints submitted by providers during that time
- In an effort to allow services to continue, federal partners allowed for name-based checks to be completed with contingency that fingerprints be collected at a later date

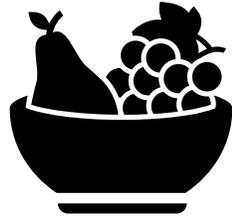


- Placements received a rate increase from March 23 to May 15 to cover additional meal or staffing requirements due to school closure
 - \$8/day increase for licensed and relative caregivers
 - \$39/day increase for residential group care facilities
- DCF Licensing staff contact residential facilities weekly to check for any needs, cover professional cleaning costs as needed

**SUPPORTING
CLIENTS**

- Older youth and youth adults provided supports including:
 - Laptops for youth needing them for secondary or post-secondary virtual education
 - 3 month extension of monthly assistance for adults ending their Independent Living subsidy at age 21
 - Additional Education and Training Voucher benefit dollars to support young adults turning 21
 - Additional family service dollars and community network supports deployed to help any youth in care or post care displaced from dormitory arrangements as campuses closed

**SUPPORTING
CLIENTS**



- DCF partnered with KSDE to administer the federal Pandemic EBT program beginning in June
- P-EBT provided families with school children that receive free and reduced-price school meals a Kansas Benefits Card to purchase food
- Caregivers of children in care including foster, relative and residential providers were eligible to apply

**SUPPORTING
CLIENTS**

- DCF implemented the Hero Relief Program in April
- Hero Relief expands DCF childcare assistance subsidies for families of essential workers and provides financial support directly to child care providers
- DCF and grantee frontline staff eligible for expanded subsidy

**SUPPORTING
CLIENTS**



COVID-19 GUIDANCE

- DCF distributed guidance to stakeholders, grantees, and families on program changes due to COVID-19
- Guidance anchored in KDHE recommendations
- Posted online at:
<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/COVID19/Pages/default.aspx>



COVID-19 GUIDANCE

- Guidance issued/posted related to foster care includes:
 - Guidance for Licensing (3/25/20)
 - Child Custody Guidance (3/3/20)
 - Congregate Provider Rates (3/30/20)
 - Family-based Provider Rates (3/27/20)
 - Guidance for CPA and CMPs (3/25/20)
 - Essential Functions Guidance for Contractors and Community Action Agencies (3/30/20)

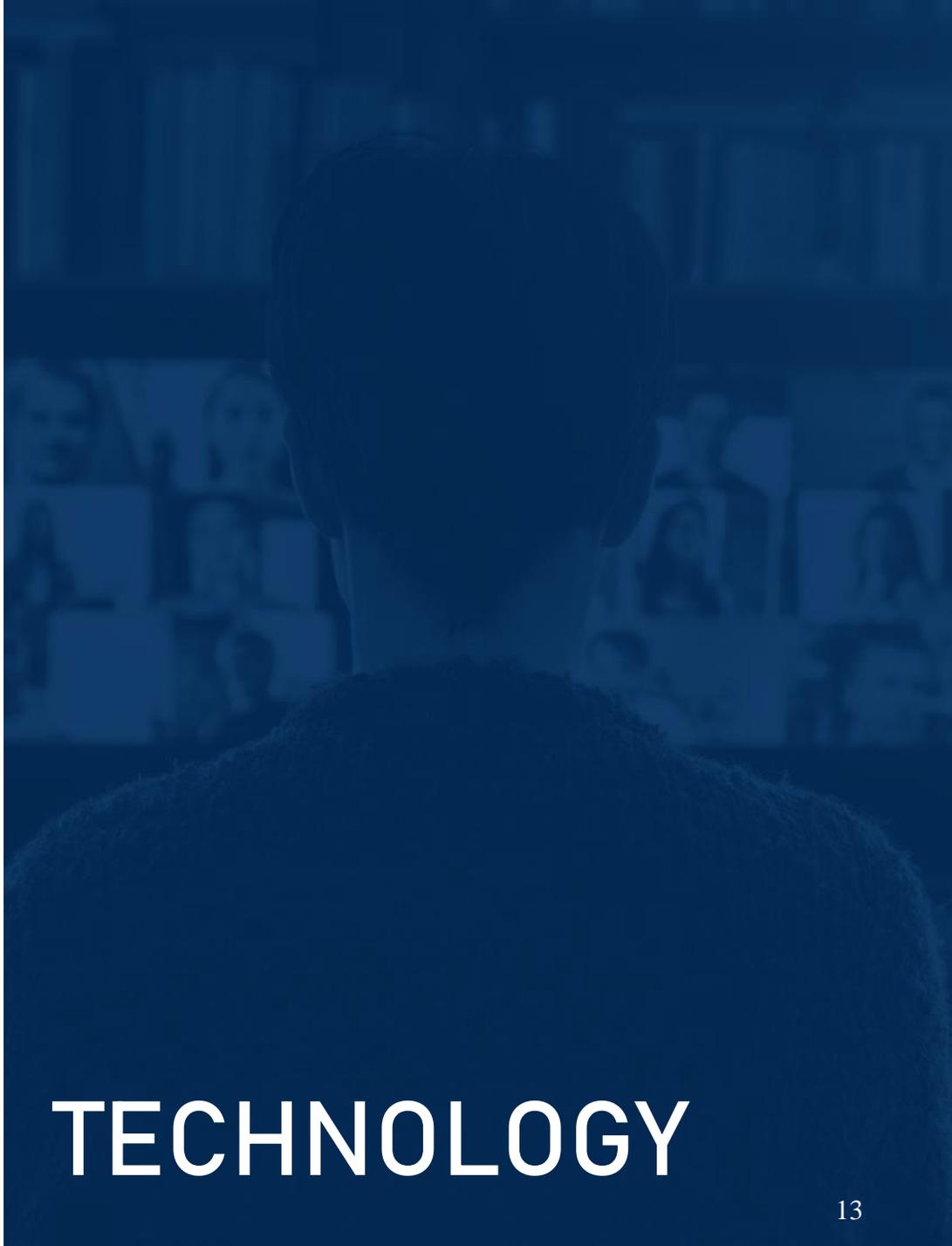


COVID-19 GUIDANCE

- The DCF foster care program issued general guidance on March 30 containing information on contacts, supporting older youth, and supporting relative providers
- Contacts with placements providers and interactions with families were permitted to move to virtual contacts facilitated through technology
- Screening questions mandated for all in-person contacts
- PPE mandated and provided in instances where contact needed to occur but screening questions indicated worry or presence of symptoms

DCF implemented new technologies in response to COVID-19 including:

- Microsoft TEAMS: A platform distributed to all DCF employees to facilitate virtual meetings and connection while working from home
- Amazon Connect: A cloud-based contact center to facilitate more efficient customer service for clients
- Chat bot: A web-based chat bot function on the DCF homepage to allow clients to receive timely answers to common questions



TECHNOLOGY



MOVING FORWARD

- DCF staff to continue to telework when possible for the time being
- DCF to continue to operate and deliver services while abiding by KDHE recommendations
- Continue to engage with families, stakeholders, grantees, etc. to ensure that families can safely access and receive services



REFLECTIONS

- DCF has engaged with law enforcement and education stakeholders during this time to increase awareness of potential for abuse/neglect while families are staying home
- Partnered with KCSL to promote their Parent Helpline, 1-800-CHILDREN
- Formation of a surge protection group with grantees to prepare for any increases in reports of abuse/neglect as children return to school
- DCF to engage in a Child and Family Well-being Learning Cohort led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Casey Family Programs that will provide child welfare support and guidance to states as youth return to school

QUESTIONS?

