



Advocacy in the Time of COVID: FAQs for CASAs

How can I connect with my child/youth during the Safer at Home order?

You can connect with your child/youth via a phone call, texting, FaceTime, Skype or even Zoom/Google Hangouts. Even though you are not visiting in-person, a phone/video chat is a great way to check-in and stay consistent.

Can I meet with my youth/child in-person, if we both stay 6 feet apart?

For the health and safety of you and your child/youth, do not meet with them in-person at this time.

What can I do on my case if I can't visit my child/youth?

There are many things you can do: You can still participate in team meetings (via phone/Zoom), follow-up on pending advocacy issues, check-in with the attorney, social worker and other folks on the case. For a more detailed list of advocacy ideas, see our guide to [CASA Advocacy Activities in the Time of COVID](#).

How can I get essential items (food, computer, etc) to my youth/child?

The first option is to see if the item can be delivered/shipped directly to the child/youth (through Amazon, Postmates, CSW, etc.). If not, you can arrange a "no contact" drop-off. Please see your advocate supervisor for guidelines on how to keep safe during these deliveries.

Are there other things I can do to help my child/youth?

Find creative ways to engage with your child/youth! Many young people feel restless when they can't leave their home, especially as school wraps up for the year. Ideas from other CASAs include:

- Check-in more frequently than once a month, even if it's just a text to say hi.
- Check with the caregiver about delivering a meal to the family/youth.
- Send an activity box with art materials, puzzles, crafts, etc to the child/youth.
- Read a book together, visit a virtual museum, play games over video/phone.



I'm ready for a new case, are you still matching CASAs to children/youth right now?

Yes! You can still review cases through ETO and we can process your match to a new case. Please note that the processing time for paperwork to get you appointment to a new child/youth is much slower than usual. You may have to wait a bit before you get started.

I am a new CASA. What should I be doing now?

If you are waiting for your court paperwork to come back, please be patient. Processing time for paperwork to get your appointment to a new child/youth is much slower than usual. Your supervisor will let you know when you can get started. In the meantime, sign up for [in-service trainings](#), check out our [online forum](#) or start reading through your child/youth's case file. Until we get the court paperwork back, you cannot reach out to anyone on the case.

When the court paperwork is processed and you are "officially" matched to your child/youth, your supervisor will set-up a phone call or Zoom meeting to discuss getting started.

Can I come to court? What about my youth and their parents and/or siblings?

No. The court is only hearing emergency issues through June 22nd. Emergency issues include removal orders (detentions), restraining orders and serious health/safety issues. It is unlikely that you will have a court hearing during this time. Make sure you check-in with your supervisor and the child's attorney to confirm your upcoming hearing.

If there is an issue requiring a hearing, youth and other case parties (parents, attorneys) are currently participating in court hearings via phone/video. They should not be appearing in-person unless ordered by the court.

What about court reports?

CASAs can still submit court reports for any **scheduled** hearings. Please make sure you are submitting reports on-time/early to your supervisor. Due to changes in court operations, we are limited to submitting reports once a week, so we have even less of a buffer for late reports!

What is happening with family visitation?

All court-ordered **in-person** visits between parents/legal guardians, children, siblings, and anyone else are temporarily suspended. **However, this may change case-by-case and some in-person visits may happen.** Note that visits (including phone and video visits) should not be suspended completely during this time, unless the court has ordered visits to cease.



[From the DCFS website:](#)

Social workers are to determine the manner of visitation to promote and maintain family bonds. Decisions about the way in which visitation is to occur shall be considered on a case-by-case basis, balancing the public health directives and the best interest of the child.

Family visits are to take place: In-person, remotely by using videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc) or by telephone. During this stressful time, we encourage liberal use of virtual visits and phone calls, with a reminder that visits are for children of ALL ages. Parents of babies are entitled to virtual visits as well.

If you have any questions about visitation schedules or visits have not been happening, please be in touch with the social worker and child's attorney on your case. As a CASA, you can help make sure visits are still taking place – even if they have to transition to a virtual visit.

I am concerned about my child/youth's education and what will happen this school year. What can I do?

Most local school districts are not penalizing young people for having low academic performance during the coronavirus crisis. To help with a young person's education:

- Join our in-service on [Special Education During a Pandemic](#) on April 23rd (or watch the recording!).
- CASAs can check-in with the district they are working with to confirm their policies about grades, graduations, technology resources, etc.
- CASAs can work with caregivers to ensure the child/youth has access to technology to complete any online assignments and get updates on how the child/youth is doing.
- CASAs can also reach out to teachers, principals and other school professionals to confirm any online school assignments or advocate for other needs.
- CASAs can research other online learning opportunities (virtual museums, reading programs, etc) to help engage with the child/youth.

My youth needs a computer/phone to access all these virtual meetings, school and visits.

iFoster is currently offering technology access to foster youth ages 13-24, which includes: free, unlimited high-speed data hotspots, headsets, and laptops to assist in taking online classes. For additional information on their available resources, call or email iFoster at: 1-855-936-7837 or phone@ifoster.org.

[One Simple Wish](#) is also an organization that is providing laptops during the COVID-19 crisis.



What is happening with mental health services?

In most cases, services can continue via phone/video. As a CASA, you can be in touch to find out if and how services are continuing. You can also advocate for mental health services to continue and help address barriers to accessing these services.

My youth is running away. How do I make sure they are staying safe? What does it look like when they return to placement?

First, CASAs can talk to their youth about what it means to be safe in public: wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart and not gathering in groups. Even if the young person does not follow your advice, it is still important for them to hear that someone cares about them and is concerned about their health.

[From DCFS website:](#)

As with anyone coming to a facility, a youth returning from runaway or unauthorized absence should be kept separate from other residents of the home or facility while being assessed for risk of COVID-19. Upon return, they should be asked to immediately and thoroughly wash their hands and assess their physical health to determine whether they are experiencing any medical symptoms indicative of COVID19, such as respiratory problems, fever, cough, muscle pain, and fatigue.

If the youth has any of the above symptoms they should be placed in quarantine to ensure the safety of other residents and staff. The youth should also be interviewed (by caregiver/placement staff) regarding their activities while gone from placement without permission to determine the level of risk of infection they were exposed to during that time.

If the youth is not willing to disclose any information about their time away from placement, strong consideration should be given towards placing them in quarantine to avoid risk of infection to other residents of the home or facility. Note: Each STRTP or resource home may treat these guidelines differently. Check in with your child/youth's home to see what precautions they are taking.

What happens when my child/youth moves placements?

During this time, all efforts should be made to ensure placement stability. As a CASA, you can partner with the team to ensure the caregiver has resources to support a child/youth and advocate for them to remain in placement. Keep in mind, it may be more difficult and take more time for social workers to find a new placement during this time.

If a child/youth is moving placements, all options should be explored by the social worker, including the potential for expedited reunification or extended visits with family.



DCFS is working with caregivers and residential facilities to develop a screening process for all new children/youth entering a new placement, including a process to screen children/youth who are at a higher risk of serious illness. Some facilities/caregivers may have their own process, including a 14-day isolation period for the child/youth. Check with your child/youth's new caregiver about their process.

Is the social worker still visiting?

[From the DCFS website:](#)

DCFS social workers will continue to complete in-person visits when responding to child abuse referrals to assess for child safety. Social workers will complete a pre-screening before starting the in-person visit and proceed accordingly for the protection of all engaged in the visit.

The Administration for Children and Families (federal government) and the California Department of Social Services is permitting monthly social worker visits for children already receiving services from DCFS to be accomplished through videoconferencing. Based on the circumstances of the case, visits can be in person or through videoconferencing (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp).

What happens if my child/youth or their caregiver tests positive for COVID-19?

If a child/youth or caregiver is showing symptoms, they should take all necessary public health precautions, including self-isolating, using separate bathrooms and dishware, washing hands and regularly disinfecting high touch surfaces. This may look different depending on the home environment; individual caregivers or STRTPs may have different processes to keep the children/youth and other safe.

The social worker and attorney should be notified as soon as possible if a caregiver or child/youth discloses they are ill.

I have an urgent issues for my child/youth. How do I bring this up if we don't have a court hearing scheduled?

Talk to your supervisor about who would be the best person to discuss the issue with. Your supervisor will likely direct you to the child's attorney or the social worker.

I am working with an NMD. They can't work or go to school while under Safer at Home. Are they going to be deemed ineligible for AB12 services?

Governor Newsom recently announced extensions to NMD eligibility and payments to ensure young adults are not left without support. We are still waiting for the exact language and policy, so more information will be provided soon. However we understand:



- Extended foster care services will be extended beyond the age of 21 until June 30, 2020. This means that if your young person turns 21, they can remain in care until June 30, 2020.
- The requirement to participate in school and/or work to remain in extended foster care is waived through June 30, 2020.
- There will be greater flexibility to approve SILP placements and allow continuation of funding for NMDs who are between placements.

CASAs can also support their NMD in filing for unemployment, Cal Fresh, or other benefits they may need during this time.

Does my NMD qualify for the stimulus payment, even if they didn't earn enough to file taxes?

Yes. If your youth receive veterans disability compensation, a pension, or survivor benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, or their income level does not require them to file a tax return, then they need to submit information to the IRS to receive an Economic Impact Payment. <https://www.freefilefillableforms.com/#/fd/EconomicImpactPayment>

What else can I do to support CASA?

Help us recruit volunteers! We still need committed and caring adults to advocate for young people, especially now. Tell your friends and post on social media! Folks can be directed to our [online information sessions](#) to learn more.

Our volunteers and staff are working diligently to provide advocacy and care to the children we are assigned to this year. If you are able to continue supporting our efforts by [donating](#) at this time to help us keep from having to reduce our crucial services, we would be extremely grateful.