Ohio | Department of Youth Services

Mike DeWine, Governor
Ryan Gies, Director

DATE: March 12, 2020

TO: Family/Guardians of DYS Youth

FROM: Ryan Gies, Director
Julie Walburn, Assistant Director

SUBJECT: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Family/Guardian,

We want to update you on a few items pertaining to our coronavirus response. Our telecommunications provider, Global Tel Link (GTL) has planned for every youth to place two free five-minute phone calls every seven days for the next 30 days. We understand the visitation suspension places a hardship on you and your loved ones, and we are making every effort to facilitate regular communication.

Parole services has also adjusted its operations by prioritizing cases that require the most attention. Juvenile parole officers will now be calling ahead to ask if anyone in the home is experiencing any flu-like symptoms before making the decision to travel there. Please proactively reach out to parole officers when the need arises.

DYS is active on social media, where you will also find updates:
Facebook: *@OhioDeptYouthServices*
Twitter: *@OhioDYS*
Instagram: *ohiodys*

Additionally, we would ask you to provide DYS with your preferred email address. We understand this is a trying time and we want to keep all lines of communication open. Please feel free to reach out to our Community Engagement Liaison, Ryan Heimberger at 614-406-7725 or ryan.heimberger@dys.ohio.gov.

As a reminder, the Ohio Department of Health is the best resource for your questions about COVID-19, and we encourage you to visit www.coronavirus.ohio.gov, which is being constantly updated with the latest information. If you have specific questions about coronavirus, feel free to call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634), which is open seven days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Thank you for your continued patience.

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What You Need to Know About Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is COVID-19?
Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory (breathing/lung) illness that can be spread from person to person.

How do you catch COVID-19?
COVID-19 is thought to be spread through the droplets that come out of the mouth of an infected person when they cough or sneeze – just like the flu. These droplets can land in another person's mouth/nose or be breathed into their lungs if they are in close contact to the infected person. Close contact is when you're within about six feet of the infected person. It also may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching something that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?
Like the flu, symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

What should I do if I have these symptoms?
If you have a fever, go home and/or stay home. If you're feeling sick, call your doctor or healthcare provider before going to their office. They will instruct you. Also consider using telehealth services.

What can I do to help stop COVID-19?
You can protect yourself from getting sick by:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (hum the birthday song twice – that's how long you should keep washing your hands). Dry your hands on a paper towel.
    * You can use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Make sure it contains at least 60 percent alcohol
    * Hand sanitizer does not replace the need for handwashing! Handwashing is your #1 defense
- Staying away from sick people
- Not touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your arm

Is there medicine or a shot I can take, so I won't catch COVID-19?
Right now, there is no special medicine or shot that will keep you from getting COVID-19. The best way to avoid infection is to wash your hands frequently with soap and water, stay away from sick people, and cover your cough/sneeze.

What happens if I do catch COVID-19?
If you have or think you have been exposed to COVID-19, call your doctor or healthcare provider. If you are feeling ill, do not go to their office without calling first. They will instruct you. Also consider using telehealth services. Do not come to work until your doctor or healthcare provider instructs you to do so.

What is DYS doing with respect to COVID-19?
DYS is working with the Ohio Department of Health to ensure our facilities are as safe as possible. We have a COVID-19 plan that is now being implemented in our facilities, including increasing our cleaning schedule to seven times per day to help stop the spread of all viruses. Additionally, visitation/volunteer activities have been suspended. Mission critical contractors may enter, along with staff and attorneys. All will undergo a health screening prior to entry. Only mission critical transfers will occur and all non-essential travel for staff has ceased.