

Foster Forward Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advisory 3/12/2020

Foster Forward is committed to protecting the health of our clients, employees and community as we remain focused on meeting the needs of the youth and families we serve. While we cannot stop the transmission of COVID-19, we are instituting precautionary measures to mitigate its progression. We understand that this is only possible if we are providing a safe and healthy environment by limiting contact between people where possible.

On 3/11/2020, our Governor issued the following guidance:

- Rhode Islanders are discouraged from organizing or attending events where 250 or more persons are in attendance
- At risk populations (60 years of age or older with underlying health conditions and anyone who is symptomatic) are discouraged from attending close proximity events
- Rhode Islanders 60 years of age or older are advised not to attend events where more than 10 persons are present
- Schools are advised not to host gatherings of 250 persons or more

Foster Forward is reviewing all organizational activities scheduled in the next three months including training classes, meetings on-site and in the community, home visiting with clients and in office appointments, service at our Community Storefront and upcoming fundraising events and we will limit activities in accordance with state guidance. Arrangements will be made whenever possible to host meetings and trainings via phone or via videoconferencing.

Foster Forward is taking additional steps to clean and sanitize our office space. We are stocking up on Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer and employees are being asked to wipe down their work spaces, door knobs and tables/chairs in meeting rooms daily to minimize risk. Foster Forward employees, independent contractors, clients and volunteers are also advised to please refrain from coming to the office if they are running a fever or display any other symptoms of illness, such as coughing or sneezing. We ask everyone to continue to take proactive precautions as recommended by public health authorities to prevent the spread of the virus. Because the Coronavirus, in addition to influenza, is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people, it is important to take the following actions to stay healthy:

- Wash your hands frequently. Use warm water and soap. This can't be done often enough.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your elbow when you sneeze or cough. Do not sneeze or cough into your hands.
- Stay home if you have a temperature, sore throat, achy joints, and/or severe cold symptoms.
- Call your doctor if you have questions about your symptoms.

When employees are scheduling appointments with clients for home-based visits and in-office appointments, they should ask all clients or applicable family members the following 3 questions:

1. Have you traveled to a country for which the CDC has issued a Level 2 or 3 travel designation (China, Iran, Italy or South Korea) or been in contact with someone who has within the last 14 days?;
2. Have you had contact with any anyone with known or suspected COVID-19?; and

3. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath)?
- If the client or family members answer “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, but “No” to question 3 (i.e., reports no symptoms of a respiratory infection) the employee should assess whether the client has any potentially urgent safety risks or behavioral health needs (e.g., medications, suicide or violence risk, etc.).
 - If there are urgent needs, the employee with their supervisor should assess whether those needs can be safely met remotely. If the client must be seen to meet urgent needs, including behavioral health needs, the employee/supervisor should instruct the client to remain at home and contact their medical professional immediately.
 - If the client does not have urgent needs or those needs can be met remotely, the employee/supervisor will advise the client to stay home and Foster Forward will work with them remotely to provide assistance. Foster Forward will recommend the client contact the RI Department of Health (RI DOH) for further guidance, which may include a recommendation for a self-imposed quarantine for 14 days.
 - If the client or family members responds “Yes” to questions 1 OR 2, AND 3, (i.e., reports having symptoms), the employee should:
 - Instruct the client to remain at home and contact their medical professional immediately.
 - Alternatively, the client may be referred to the nearest emergency room for immediate attention.
 - In all circumstances above, the employee should instruct the client or family member to notify the receiving medical provider and transporter in advance of potential concern for COVID-19. (contact information below)

Finally, Foster Forward is anticipating that the current health crisis will have a tremendous impact on the clients we serve, potentially disrupting their health and well-being, income and housing stability, and access to food and other basic needs. We are working to develop contingency plans for clients who will experience disruption or displacement as a result of this crisis. Foster Forward is urging clients to contact us at (401) 438-3900 if they need assistance while discouraging clients from making unscheduled visits to the Foster Forward office at this time. Clients who make an unscheduled visit will be asked the above questions and served accordingly. The Foster Forward Community Storefront is temporarily suspending open hours and will serve foster families individually by appointment only.

Important numbers + website:

RIDOH 24/7 Emergency line: 401-222-6911

RIDOH COVID-19 Hotline: 222-8022 (8:30-4:30), 211 after hours

RI COVID-19 Website: health.ri.gov/covid