



June 3, 2020

Dear Contracted Residential Agency Caregiver:

I hope that this letter finds you well. I appreciate all that you and your staff are doing to support the children and youth you are caring for and to keep them connected to their families. As British Columbia moves into a phased restart plan, scaling up in-person connections (visitation) and facilitating access between children, youth and their families is a key and critical priority. I am pleased to share information on the plan to scale up in-person connections between children and youth in care and their families.

On March 26, 2020 a decision to suspend in-person connections for children and youth in care was made with the provision for exceptions. As we move toward scaling-up in-person connections that were in place prior to the decision, it will be important to consider the views and circumstances of the child/youth, the parent(s) the caregivers and the community.

Effective June 3, 2020 we are transitioning to increasing in-person connections for children and youth in care who were having in person connections with their family prior to March 26, 2020.

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) provided foundational principles that assist in guiding how we collaboratively plan for in-person connections for children and youth in care and their families. Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C. and the fact that children are at a much lower risk of developing or transmitting COVID-19, in-person connections can occur while considering the health and safety of children/youth and adults.

Virtual connections have been a positive way of children/youth connecting to their families and extended families and will never replace in-person connection. Virtual connections through Skype are encouraged to continue, and your resource worker and the child/youth's social worker can assist in ensuring that there are no barriers to providing this virtual connection.

For additional information and resources you can access the updated bulletin here - https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/covid-19/bulletin_4_scaling_up_in_person_connections_and_facilitating_access_external.pdf

The links to the Town Hall and accompanying slide deck with Dr Daniele Behn Smith are below. Please note as this was recorded on May 13, 2020 the information from the Provincial Director of Child Welfare, Cory Heavener, is out of date as the practice bulletin regarding *SCALING UP IN-PERSON CONNECTIONS AND FACILITATING ACCESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH THEIR FAMILIES* has been updated. Dr Behn Smith's information remains current.

Contracted Service Provider video - <https://youtu.be/QHRt7f9sVgQ>

Dr Behn Smith's slide deck - <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/covid-19/bc-restart-dr-behn-smith.pdf>

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to and support for the children and youth in your care. Please connect with your Resource Social Worker at any time, for any reason, if you have any questions or need support in this time of transition for yourself, your family, or the children in your home.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cory Heavener". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Cory Heavener
Provincial Director of Child Welfare/Assistant Deputy Minister