



## Vermont Parent Representation Center, Inc.

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PO Box 4087 Burlington, VT 05406 (802) 540-0200 [www.vtprc.org](http://www.vtprc.org)

April 10, 2020

Representative Pugh  
Vermont State House  
Montpelier, VT

Re: Parent/Child visitation during COVID-19

Dear Representative Pugh:

In conjunction with the U.S. Children's Bureau\*, the Vermont Parent Representation Center, Inc (VPRC) supports direct parent/child visitation where ever possible during the current public health emergency. As we know, the single greatest determiner for the reunification of children with their families is consistent visitation while in state custody.

\*Family time is important for child and parent well-being, as well as for efforts toward reunification. Family time is especially important during times of crisis. CB strongly discourages the issuance of blanket orders that are not specific to each child and family that suspend family time; doing so is contrary to the well-being and best interest of children, may contribute to additional child trauma, and may impede the likelihood of reunification.

Although we acknowledge that not all face to face visitation may be possible, we strongly encourage you to support the following:

1. Face to face visitation between nursing mothers and their infants; as well as parents with children under the age of three years as electronic visitation is virtually useless for these groups.
2. Of equal importance is the *immediate reunification* of children with their families in cases where reunification is scheduled to occur within the upcoming 50 days. Any child scheduled for reunification within the next 50 days is well past the point of readiness for immediate transfer and doing so now will avoid future delays brought about by an in determinant hiatus in parent/child contact. Additionally, the last 6 weeks or so before reunification is spent completing paperwork, a non-essential during this trying period. DCF family support should accompany reunification as quickly as possible afterward.

Respectfully yours,

*Larry Crist*

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Cc: Representative Sandy Haas