



COVID-19—Important Message for AFSCME Members in the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

APRIL 20, 2020

DCFS employees have remained on the frontlines despite the coronavirus pandemic. From the outset your DCFS Standing Committee—16 members from AFSCME local unions that include DCFS employees, along with Council 31 staff—has been meeting with agency management to advance policies to keep our members as safe as possible.

It has not been easy. Early in the process, our efforts led to a significant reduction in the number of staff required to report to an office. But there are still other employees who could be working at home—and the union is continuing to make the case for them to be able to do so.

We are particularly concerned about field staff who must continue to see families, especially investigators. Management has so far refused to change their investigatory protocols despite the threat that the coronavirus poses to these employees and the families they serve. While the union was able to secure PPE, it is not sufficient for those working in the field. Nor has management communicated well about safe procedures for PPE use and reuse.

Your union is continuing to work every day to improve safety procedures. [Click here to read a letter sent this week to Director Smith urging specific practice changes for investigators.](#) In addition, the AFSCME Standing Committee is pressing for a number of other measures that would improve working conditions for all DCFS staff, including:

- Close DCFS offices to the public, as other state agencies have done. Further limit the number of days clerical staff must report.
- Supply PPE that meets the CDC guidance for law enforcement (not just gloves and masks but eye covering and gowns) in sufficient quantities to allow workers to wear into every home, hospital, or court house they must visit.
- Provide accommodations for staff with child care needs and underlying conditions so they can work at home—especially investigatory staff who have been excluded from coverage under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act emergency child care leave provisions.

As long as DCFS employees stand on the frontlines of this pandemic, your union will keep fighting for your safety.