

HOME VISITATION AND CONTACT GUIDANCE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 FOR CHILD WELFARE FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES

July 9, 2020

The following guidance is based on the most current Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidance. The health and safety of children, family, staff and administrators are of the utmost importance. This guidance is not intended to address every potential scenario that may arise as this event evolves.

Keep open lines of communication at all levels daily within your respective organization. Open communication decreases anxiety for workers as well as families. It is important that each child welfare service contractor and Department of Human Services (DHS) worker maintain constant communication with one another.

Home visitation and in-person visits with families are an essential aspect of providing services designed to ensure the protection of children and families.

NOTICE

If you have a fever of 100.4 or above, or an emerging cough, you must stay home, contact your supervisor, and contact your healthcare provider. Inform your healthcare provider that you are essential workforce working with vulnerable individuals. Please indicate you work for the Department of Human Services, request a COVID-19 test processed by the State Hygienic Laboratory and report this information to your supervisor. If you are denied a test, report this information to your supervisor.

DHS is committed to protecting and ensuring the health and safety of the children and youth, the family, and caregivers who support them, and the workers who serve them.

In-person contacts during provision of Family-Centered Services and the Kinship Navigator Program will continue at this time. Face masks are recommended to be worn at all times with in-person contacts.

- ▶ If you need to drive somewhere with a participant or others in the car, consider having riders ride in back and open the windows.

MITIGATION PRACTICES MUST BEGIN FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN FAMILY INTERACTION, HOME VISITATION AND OTHER SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES REQUIRING IN-PERSON CONTACT WITH FAMILIES

1. Implement common-sense practices for preventing disease spread, such as covering a cough, staying home when sick, and washing hands. The CDC recommends washing hands for at least 20 seconds.
2. Wearing a face mask/cloth covering is recommended.
3. Call in advance of conducting home visits or other in-person meetings (see screening questions below which should be discussed in advance).

4. During in-person meetings, do not sit within 6 feet of anyone in the home.
5. Avoid handling paperwork during the meeting.
6. Avoid touching your face or hair during the meeting.
7. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with warm, soapy water or hand sanitizer before and after the meeting.

CONTAINMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

When preparing or scheduling appointments for in-person visits, be sure to ask all adult subjects and household members the following questions:

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- ▶ Fever or chills
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Muscle or body aches
- ▶ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ New loss of taste or smell
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Congestion or runny nose
- ▶ Nausea or vomiting



Have you had contact with anyone who has known or possible exposure to the COVID-19 in the last 14 days?



Are you on home quarantine or isolation due to possible contact with someone with possible or confirmed COVID-19 or due to travel?



Have you or anyone in the household recently discharged from a hospitalization due to confirmed COVID-19 or due to travel?

Workers should also answer the screening questions for themselves prior to making a home or in-person visit. If any of the answers are ‘yes,’ workers should contact their primary care provider, follow the primary care provider’s direction and not conduct any home visits to DHS children/families until cleared by their primary care provider to do so. Workers should also notify their supervisor of the above.

Anyone who answers “yes” to the screening questions should consult with their health care provider and public health as appropriate to follow relevant guidance which includes but is not limited to:

- ▶ Direct the household member to visit www.testiowa.com and enter their information, or to contact their local public health department or health care practitioner for guidance.
- ▶ Advise the household member to stay home, except to get medical care and to separate himself/herself from other people and animals.
 - Direct the household member to avoid sharing personal household items and to clean high touch surfaces every day.
 - As appropriate, suggest other household members stay in another room or be separated from that household member as much as possible.
 - Suggest that the household member limits non-essential visitors in the home.

- ▶ Document pre-visit screening information in appropriate systems.
- ▶ Do not conduct any in-person visits. Contacts may be made through phone, videoconferencing*, and teleconferencing.
 - Include screening data within the required documentation for the respective service being provided to the family.
 - In-person contact and visitation should resume once the symptoms of illness are clear.

*When selecting a videoconferencing platform, child welfare services contractors should consider HIPAA compliance issues and consult with their own legal counsel. A platform with a Business Associate Agreement (BAA) that is HIPAA compliant is sufficient for videoconferencing.

If no pre-screening phone call is made in advance of contact with a family, workers should conduct the screening questions outside of the family home within a safe distance from one another.

If parents/caregivers answer “no” during pre-screening for the above questions, then proceed with home or in-person visit.

FAMILY TEAM DECISION-MAKING (FTDM) AND YOUTH TRANSITION DECISION-MAKING (YTDM) MEETINGS (ATTENDANCE/FACILITATION)

When it comes to conducting FTDM meetings, the family maintains the decision to choose the method of their meeting.

If the family chooses to have an in-person FTDM meeting, an in-person meeting will be held with the following expectations:

- ▶ Face masks are recommended to be worn at all times.
- ▶ The room should be clean with the table/chairs and other equipment wiped down with disinfectant wipes before and after the meeting.
- ▶ The room should be equipped with hand sanitizer.
- ▶ No one should sit within 6 feet from one another in the room.

If the family chooses not to have an in-person meeting, videoconferencing is the next option to conduct the meeting. If videoconferencing is not available, a meeting by phone is allowed. If no meeting is held, document if canceled or postponed and include the reason.

The above FTDM meeting procedures apply to facilitation of YTDM meetings with the youth having decision to choose the method of their meeting.

FAMILY INTERACTIONS

Frequent family interaction is the strongest indicator of family reunification and achievement of permanency. Continued meaningful family interaction supports these goals and decreases the stress and anxiety of family separation during this unprecedented time. Family interactions will be in-person unless decisions made at the local DHS and contractor level determine in-person contact on certain cases is not safe or appropriate at this time. Mitigating risk of transmission includes asking the pre-screening health questions regarding the presence of a cough and fever or known coronavirus exposure. Parents and children should be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before, during, and after the interaction.

GENERAL RESOURCES

The situation related to COVID-19 is changing rapidly. Visit the websites below for up-to-date information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Iowa Department of Public Health:

<https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>

COVID-19 DHS Resources:

<https://dhs.iowa.gov/COVID19>

The information outlined in this document is further subject to change due to the rapidly evolving situation related to COVID-19. This guidance remains in place until further notice.

If you become aware of a confirmed or presumptively positive case, please notify the DHS referring worker, your supervisor, and Mindy Norwood, Program Manager over Family-Centered Child Welfare Services at mnorwoo@dhs.state.ia.us.