

Making Virtual Parent Visits More Meaningful

Delivering quality information and resources to Texas Community Organizations and Caregivers in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

With parent visits switching from face to face to a virtual platform, we want to ensure these visits continue to be meaningful and provide an opportunity for parent-child bonding. Below are some virtual parent visit suggestions for providers.

EMPOWER FOSTER PARENTS

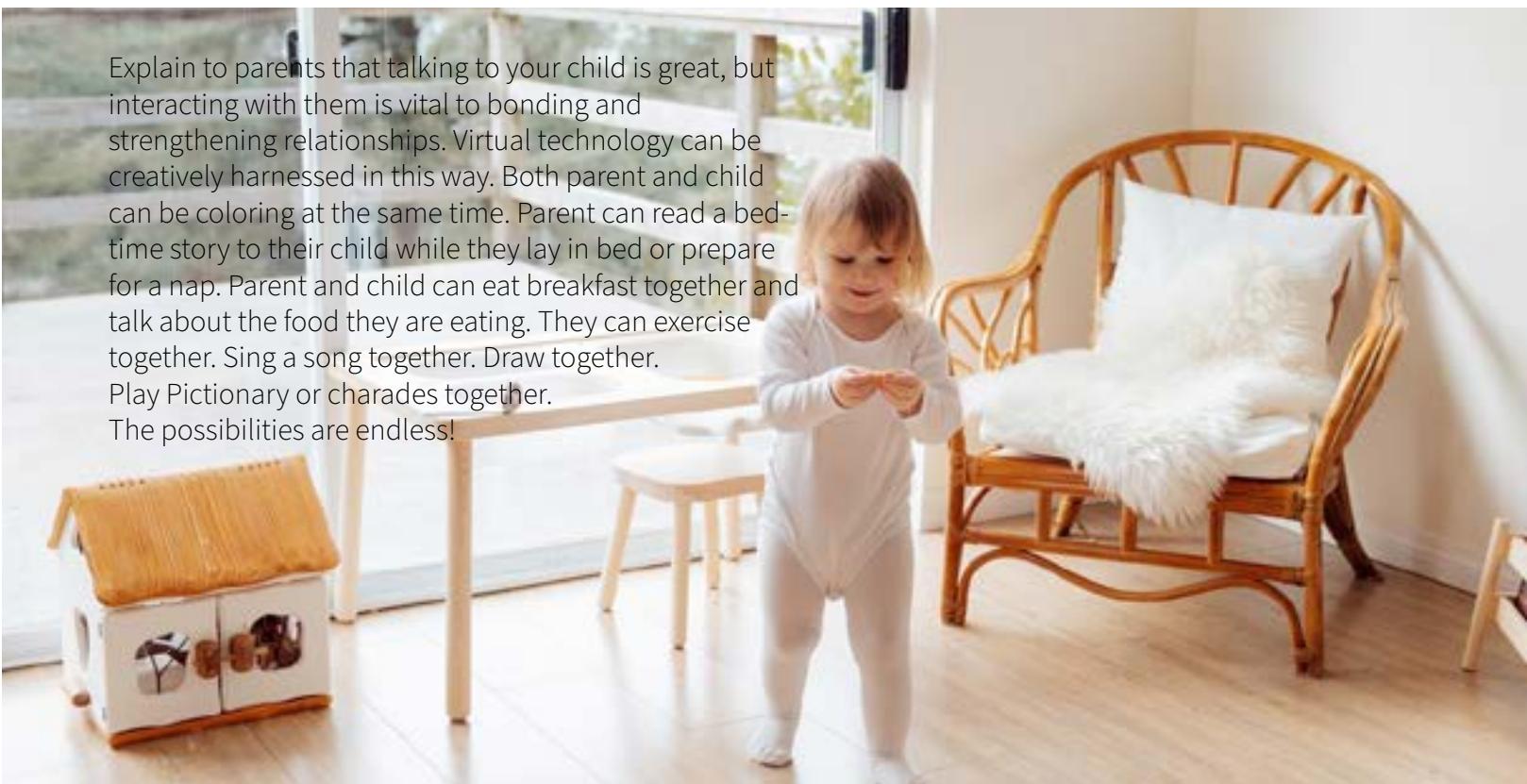
Now is the time to work with our foster parents or care takers and rely on their expertise and knowledge of the children to guide quality visits for parents. Encourage direct care staff, house parents or foster parents to be creative in coming up with ideas for virtual visits/phone calls. Empower them to make suggestions and help guide the visits around their knowledge of the child's abilities, interests and daily schedule.

DECREASE LENGTH, BUT INCREASE FREQUENCY

Decrease the length of the call/virtual visit – 60 minutes is a long time for any child, even older children, to stay focused, especially on a virtual format – and instead increase frequency. For example, instead of one, 60-minute virtual visit a week, there could be four, 15-minute visits in a week. Make sure parents understand you are not taking time away from them, but instead increasing frequency in order to make the calls higher quality. Help parents understand it doesn't matter if the call/visit was short, if it was a quality 5 or 10 minutes, that's what matters and you can do it again the next day or in a couple of days.

ENCOURAGE INTERACTION VS TALKING ONLY

Explain to parents that talking to your child is great, but interacting with them is vital to bonding and strengthening relationships. Virtual technology can be creatively harnessed in this way. Both parent and child can be coloring at the same time. Parent can read a bed-time story to their child while they lay in bed or prepare for a nap. Parent and child can eat breakfast together and talk about the food they are eating. They can exercise together. Sing a song together. Draw together. Play Pictionary or charades together. The possibilities are endless!



SOMETIMES IT'S OK FOR PARENTS TO BE OBSERVERS

Explain to your parent, If their child is not in an interactive space (doesn't want to talk or be asked a lot of questions), it's OK to just be an observer in their life. Our phones and ipads and devices are so small and mobile now, a child or foster parent can carry it around while the child completes their daily activities. This can help their parent feel like they are learning more about their child's day to day activities. A parent can watch their younger child while they: brush their teeth, do an art project, color, get ready for bed, learn a new chore, play with other children in the home. They can watch their older kids while they are: cooking, drawing, playing a video game.

BE PATIENT!

Explain to your parents the importance of patience. With young children, small things really do matter. Wave back and forth with them. Say the same word or phrase back and forth. Parent can call out/name what the child is doing/playing with. Help parents understand that kids aren't always in the right headspace to engage in a meaningful, virtual visit. Encourage them to not get frustrated if the visit isn't going well or the child is disengaged. This is why frequency, instead of length is a better goal. Help parents understand to not take it personally if their child seems disinterested or unengaged during the call/visit. Encourage them to tell their child, "it seems like today isn't a good day for a visit – let's try again tomorrow."

CREATIVITY, CREATIVITY, CREATIVITY

Explain to your parents the importance of flexibility and creativity. Virtual visits are not face to face visits. They don't have to and won't look just like face to face visits do and that's OK. Embrace what you have and create a new normal.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- [COVID-19 Resident Symptoms or Report of Exposure](#)
- [Protocol for Use of PPE in Caring for Medically Confirmed COVID Case in Children's Shelter](#)
- [Talking to Children and Youth about COVID-19](#)
- [Successful Video Visits with Youth Children](#)
- [Child Welfare Safety Assessment and Planning During COVID-19 and Social Distancing](#)