



## Sarah

My name is Sarah and my husband and I, along with our two sons, live in the Merrimack Valley. Our youngest son has Down syndrome and receives several services through Early Intervention. Our services were done via Zoom or Google Meets for the last 15 months or so. This ended up working out alright at first, since my son was still pretty young and not mobile. Additionally, my older son has services through the same center so the care team has been working with my family for several years. We have a good relationship and worked well together over the computer. In the late spring and early summer, virtual visits became more challenging as my son started cruising and trying to close the laptop during visits.

So, when re-starting in-person visits was brought up, I felt both excited and nervous. My son has had respiratory issues in the past and exposing him to COVID via his therapists made me nervous. However, I knew that he was outgrowing virtual visits and the greatest impact could be made by in-person therapies. The center's policy was that providers were not supposed to disclose vaccination status, but we had all talked about our own vaccination experiences before in-person visits were on the table, so I knew that his care team was fully vaccinated. This made me feel safer. I also book my son's appointments to be the first visit of their day, so the therapists are not exposed to other children before him that day. We also have everyone wash their hands and take off shoes when they enter the house. Additionally, his team explained to me that they have to wear masks during all visits, and that they do not enter homes if adults are not wearing masks. They are also supposed to keep 6 feet of distance from the family they are visiting at all times (though I appreciate this is difficult with toddlers). These rules made me feel better about letting people back in our home.

The first visit went surprisingly well. Even with the mask on, my son recognized his physical therapist and was happy to show her all his toys. We have done some visits outside to limit exposure, but with the poor weather this summer, that hasn't always been possible. With the Delta variant, I have been more nervous about visits and have tried to do more outside. His team is very understanding of that, and we get a lot of great gross motor work in playing outside. I am still worried about the winter, but I think the benefit of having therapists work directly with my son is worth the risk. He has made great progress on a lot of goals since being in-person.