Guidance for In-Person Visitation for Congregate Care facilities

This guidance is provided with the understanding that agencies/facilities providing congregate care, group home care, or mental health/intellectual and developmental disabilities services may have their own guidelines and requirements for visitation. Child Welfare Social Workers should contact these facilities prior to scheduling visitation to ensure that these guidelines will be followed.

Planning In-Person Visits for children residing in a congregate care setting

Provide information to each participant about the steps that will be taken by child welfare staff, parents, children, and resource providers, and address any known concerns of the participants, **before** in-person visits. Discuss the importance of in-person visits for children with all participants. Everyone must be aware of and incompliance with court orders for visitation.

There are some children and youth with underlying health conditions for whom continuing virtual visits remains in their best interest. In these cases, a consultation with a medical provider prior to resuming in-person visitation will be necessary.

A signed visitation plan agreeing to adhering to safety measures is recommended prior to the in-person visit being scheduled. A sample visitation plan is attached.

Scheduling:

- All visits should be scheduled through the designated congregate care staff;
- Schedule all visits in advance. 48 hours advance notice is preferred;
- Congregate care facilities may limit the days visitation can occur to accommodate their program needs;
- Limit visits to 2 visitors from same household per family;
- Congregate care facilities may limit the duration of the visitation to accommodate their program needs.

Before scheduling the first in-person visit, congregate care staff should communicate with the parents, child(ren) (if age and developmentally appropriate), and social workers for the children, to create a plan for in-person visitations, including:

- Considerations for the physical and emotional safety of all participating children, parents, care providers, including considerations of the parents' living arrangements, and the community's welfare;
- Considerations for the physical and emotional safety of any adult participants deemed "high-risk" per CDC guidelines;
- Considerations for conforming with social distancing recommendations and additional measures aimed at protecting the health and safety of all participants; and,
- Considerations of and determinations about which participants are critical to successful parent-child visitations in order to reduce unnecessary exposure to other, non-essential parties. This may not be the best time to physically introduce new people to children and families if such introductions can be postponed.

Screening:

- Visitors should do the following before each visit:
    - Complete screening questionnaire to identify if any COVID symptoms are present. Some facilities may have nursing department staff who complete this process. A sample screening tool is attached.
    - A temperature check may be required.

The visit should not take place if:

- The screening questionnaire is answered in the affirmative for any of the COVID related symptoms;
- The parents are currently quarantined with suspected/confirmed COVID or due to contact with known case of COVID;
- Anyone involved with the visit has active symptoms suggestive of COVID: shortness of breath, cough, fever >100 degrees.

Locations of In-Person Visits

- The locations in which in-person visits occur should be clean, safe, and chosen to minimize exposure to others. **Outside spaces are preferable to indoor spaces**.
- Visits should take place at the congregate care site whenever possible.
- Home visits should not take place unless a health screening has been completed with the family and the child and the family, and DSS worker continuously wear face coverings and any other personal protective equipment needed while social distancing throughout the visit. Some facilities may have policies that prohibit a child from returning if they leave the facility grounds for visitation.
- Overnight visits away from the facility are not recommended at this time.

Outdoor locations

- Encourage conducting visits outdoors whenever possible. Choose a location with a pavilion or an overhang in case of rain.
- Alternatively, a large room/space (such as gym area) could be used.
- If the visit must take place off-site parks and other recreational facilities are good options. Check with the park in advance to be sure you know which areas and/or services are open, such as bathroom facilities, playgrounds and athletic fields, and bring what you need for the visitations with you.
- The CDC recommends that playground equipment not be used as it can be challenging to keep surfaces clean and disinfected sufficiently.
- Adult visit participants are expected to maintain appropriate physical distance (at least 6 feet at all times) and take additional steps to prevent COVID-19 as needed. This might make some open areas like trails and paths better to use than other park areas and spaces. Avoid crowded areas.
- Children are not expected to maintain physical distance when interacting with other children. When possible, parents should engage in activities that minimize close physical proximity.
- Participants should stay practice social distancing, staying at least 6 feet away from each other and from other people not involved in the visit and take all additional steps to prevent COVID-19.

Indoor locations

- Alternatives to outdoor spaces are locations withs large rooms/spaces (such as gym area).
- Must be disinfected before and after visits.
- Must allow for social distancing of six (6) feet between all participants, including children, parents, resource providers, social workers, etc. Avoid crowded locations.
- Visitation rooms must be disinfected before and after each visit.
- Toys and items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected should not be brought to the visit.

Participants attending In-Person Visits

All adults participating in a visit (staff, social workers, and family members) must wear a mask.

Congregate care staff responsibilities

Pre-appointment process:

- Congregate care staff will make arrangements for the visits in coordination with the child's social worker, following all protocols for informing other departments such as nursing.
- Ensure health screening protocols are complete within the timeframes recommended.
- Congregate care staff should meet visitors at designated location and review requirements verbally (mask, hand washing, ask if sick or exposed to anyone who has been ill).
    - Temperature check
        - When available the nurse should ask during call prior to visits.
        - When forehead thermometers available congregate care staff will conduct forehead temperature checks when the visitor arrives for their scheduled appointment.
        - Some facilities may have nursing department staff who will check the temperature of all participants prior to the visit.
    - Face coverings
        - Face coverings are required for all adults and children over the age of two.
        - Confirm prior to the visit that visitors have face coverings. If they do not have them communicate to the child welfare worker assigned to their case the need to obtain face coverings.
        - Spot check for adherence to mask-wearing and remaining in designated areas.
        - Visitation will end if participants are not adhering to the health safety measures.
    - All Visitors must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before the visit begins.
    - Congregate care staff will show visitors to sink for hand-washing

- Surfaces will be disinfected at the end of visit.

Transportation for In-Person Visits

When visits take place off-site staff should provide transportation for children to and from in-person visits whenever safely possible and based on availability.

Staff Transportation

- Staff and all children must wash hands or use hand sanitizing gel prior to entering the car.
- Staff and children must wear face coverings while in a car together. Face coverings are not recommended for children under the age of two.
- Staff must clean and disinfect the car before and after transporting a child(ren) to an in-person visitation.
- To maintain a proper distance, passengers should refrain from sitting in the front of the vehicle.
- Drivers should limit occupancy to no more than two (2) passengers per vehicle. If all parties/riders live in the same household and the vehicle can accommodate all riders in the back seat(s), then more than two (2) passengers from the same household can ride in one vehicle. If not, then only one passenger per vehicle is permitted.
- All persons (drivers and passengers) are required to wear face coverings when providing or using any car or van transportation services. Face coverings are not recommended for children under the age of two.
- Drivers should wash or sanitize hands on a routine basis. At a minimum, this should be done after each ride.
- Drivers should avoid recirculating air through the cars' ventilation systems during passenger transport. Drivers are strongly encouraged to open windows or allow passengers to lower the vehicle windows, according to CDC guidelines.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/rideshare-drivers-for-hire.html

Vehicles used for transportation

All vehicles should be disinfected prior to and after each use, as follows:

- Vehicles should be wiped down including all hard, non-porous surfaces (hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and grab handles) with a disinfectant approved by the EPA. Guidance is available from the CDC -*Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes*
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html

- When time allows spray disinfectant should be sprayed and allowed to air dry. If a car is used for transporting anyone who begins to show the CDC identified symptoms of COVID-19 and/or is known to have COVID-19, immediately follow protocol developed by your agency.
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html

Disinfecting Visit Rooms:

- Toys and items that cannot be easily cleaned must be removed from visitation rooms, including stuffed animals, dolls, toys, and books.
- Toys that can be easily cleaned should be rotated after each visit to allow additional time to spray with disinfectant and left to air dry before the next use.
- All visitation rooms must be disinfected before and after each visit. Time permitting, the spray should be left to dry. At a minimum, all hard surfaces and frequently touched surfaces should be wiped down using a disinfectant approved by the EPA. Guidance is available from the CDC -*Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes*
  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html
- Safe use of disposable or cloth face face coverings should occur. For any type of mask, appropriate use and disposal are essential to ensure that they are effective and to avoid contamination. Self-contamination can occur by touching and reusing contaminated face coverings. Additional information and guidance from the CDC and World Health Organization (WHO) can be accessed via the following links: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering.pdf