

Family Time In-Person Visitation Protocol During COVID-19

Foster Parents and Caregiver Information

We know these have been challenging times and appreciate everything you are doing to support children and their families during this stressful time.

Given increasing COVID-19 disease activity across the state, reducing the opportunity to transmit the virus in Family Time visits needs to be addressed in every case. For more information, go to <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/covid-19-risk-assessment-dashboard>. At the same time, it is vitally important for children to remain connected with their parents and siblings during the pandemic, which has serious emotional and cognitive consequences for children and youth.

The DCYF caseworker will work with you, the parent, the parent's legal representation and visit provider to create an agreed temporary COVID-19 Aware Family Time Plan. You can review the Temporary COVID Aware Family Time Plan guidance on our website: www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/FamTimePlan.pdf.

In-Person Visitation During COVID-19

To ensure the health and safety of children, families, parents and caregivers, DOH has provided health guidance and protocols that need to be followed to make the visitation as safe as possible for all participants.



Prior to the Visitation

The Family Time provider or caseworker (if the caseworker is the one supervising the visit) will call the parent and the foster parent or caregiver, the day prior, to confirm the visit. On the call, the Family Time Provider or caseworker will ask if anyone in the home is experiencing any of the following symptoms, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DOH Screening Guidelines, that cannot be attributed to another health condition:

- A cough.
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing.
- Two or more of the following symptoms:
 - A fever or feels feverish.
 - A sore throat.
 - Chills or repeated shaking with chills.
 - New loss of taste or smell.
 - Muscle aches.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
- DOH Screening Guidelines: www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19



If the responses to the screening questions are in the negative, the contracted Family Time provider or caseworker can move forward with the scheduled visit.

If the responses of either the parent or foster parent/caregiver to the screening questions are in the affirmative, the contracted Family Time provider or caseworker shall:

- Offer to change the visit from in-person to remote.
- If the remote visit is not an option; cancel the visit and reschedule.

The contracted Family Time provider shall contact the caseworker immediately (within one business day) to let them know the change in modality and/or cancellation of the visitation. See the section “Reschedule a Visit” for directions on when to safely reschedule.

On the Day of the Visit

Prior to the visit occurring or transporting the child, the contracted Family Time provider or caseworker shall ask the following questions of the foster parents or caregiver prior to transporting the child, and shall ask the parent prior to beginning the visit, the following questions:

- Is anyone experiencing any of the symptoms per the DOH Screening Guidelines that cannot be attributed to another health condition?
- Have you or anyone in your household, within the last 14 days, had close contact with someone currently sick with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?

If the responses to the screening questions are in the affirmative, the contracted Family Time Provider or caseworker shall:

- Offer to change the visit from in-person to remote.
- If the remote visit is not an option; cancel the visit and reschedule.

The contracted Family Time provider shall contact the caseworker immediately (within one business day) to let them know the change in modality and/or cancellation of the visitation. See the section “Reschedule a Visit” for directions on when to safely reschedule.

During the Visitation

The following safety protocols will be followed during the in-person visitation:

- Visit participants over the age of 2 years old will need to wear a mask or cloth face covering that covers the mouth and nose. For more information, go to www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/ClothFacemasks.pdf.
- Visit participants will be asked to wash hands for at least 20 seconds using warm water and soap or use hand sanitizer when the visit begins (DOH recommends hand sanitizer to be 60% alcohol).
- Visitation is limited to the person(s) identified in the court’s order on visits. If the caseworker has approved others to participate in the visit, the parent may use their phone or video conference equipment to include any additional participants remotely.
- If the parent wishes to bring toys/items to the visit, the toy/item must be sanitized in the room and the toy/item should not go with the child back to their foster or caregiver home.
- The visit supervisor should practice social distancing during visitation. We do not expect that the parent and child(ren) will practice social distancing during a visitation unless they have agreed otherwise or a court has ordered otherwise.

If these health and safety protocols are not followed before and during visits, the in-person visit will be canceled and the caseworker will be notified immediately (within one business day). The contracted family time provider will work to reschedule the visit.

Overnight and Extended Visits

Overnight and extended visits are key to the safe, timely reunification of children with their parents. These visits are court-ordered and should occur as scheduled, even during the pandemic. Please refer to the publication *Overnight and Extended Family Time Visits During COVID-19* (CWP_0069) for more information: www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0069.pdf.

Rescheduled Visits

To reschedule to in-person, the Family Time provider and/or caseworker must adhere to DOH timelines for when it is okay to no longer self-isolate. DOH guidance, available online at www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVIDconcerned.pdf states that if someone has a fever, cough or other symptoms of COVID-19, even if they have not been around anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, should stay home and away from others until:

- At least three days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement of respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

The contracted Family Time provider or caseworker shall offer remote visitation during the time the person is recovering from the COVID-19 like symptoms, assuming they feel well enough to participate.

If these health and safety protocols are not followed, the contracted Family Time provider shall contact the caseworker immediately (within one business day).

Court Ordered Visits

Unless otherwise ordered, DCYF is required to provide in-person visitation. Changes to a court-ordered visit can only be handled by the DCYF caseworker and the legal team addressing the court.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

You are required to wear a mask and utilize sanitation expectations anytime you are engaging with people. For DOH guidance, go to: www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HigherRiskforSeriousIllness.

Transportation Guidance

We are taking every precaution to ensure the health and safety of all involved in visitation, providers and caseworkers have been given the following information regarding transporting the child(ren) to and from visitation. The following guidance shall be followed:

- Masks or cloth face coverings should be worn while in the car by the child(ren) and the person transporting. Children under the age of 2 years old should not wear masks.
- Surfaces in the car need to be wiped down following sanitizing procedures in between each and every transport.
- Increase ventilation while in transit by opening vehicle windows when children are transported by providers.
- An option is to ask caregivers to transport children to and from a visit to reduce exposure.
- Car seats should be cleaned according to your car seat owner's manual. Review the manual for how to correctly wash and dry your specific car seat and its various components. It is important to **not** use anything additional in the car seat, as it could create a safety issue for the child. For instructions on how to safely clean coronavirus from your child's car seat go here: www.consumerreports.org/car-seats/how-to-safely-clean-coronavirus-from-your-childs-car-seat.

- The contractor shall not transport children from multiple households at the same time in the same vehicle. If sibling children live at the same foster or caregiver home, they can be transported together in the same vehicle, but you should not pick up children from different foster or caregiver homes and transport them at the same time.
- Siblings that are attending visitation together may be transported in the same vehicle, even if they are from different households.

Cleaning Guidance

To ensure the health and safety of the visit supervisors, and others who are in contact with the visitation participants, the visitation rooms will be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected after every visit.

DOH provides the following guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting, which visitation providers and DCYF are adhering to:

- **Cleaning** removes germs, dirt, food, body fluids and other material. Cleaning increases the benefit of sanitizing or disinfecting.
- **Sanitizing** reduces germs on surfaces to levels that are safe.
- **Disinfecting** kills germs on surfaces of a clean object.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates sanitizer and disinfectant chemicals. If you sanitize or disinfect without cleaning first, it will reduce how well these chemicals work and may leave more germs on the object.

Current guidance from the CDC states that disinfectants should be registered by the EPA for use against the novel coronavirus. For more information, go to www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19. Disinfectants based on hydrogen peroxide or alcohol are safer. The University of Washington has a handout with options for safer cleaning and disinfecting products that work well against COVID-19 online here: http://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/FactSheet_Cleaning_Final_UWDEOHS_0.pdf.

Clean and sanitize toys, equipment and surfaces in the rooms. Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces like doorknobs, faucet handles, check-in counters and restrooms. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboards and electronics. Wash hands after you clean. Reduce the spread of germs in the program space by removing toys that are not easily cleaned such as stuffed animals and pillows. Rotate toys that are out at any one time, so they can be cleaned and sanitized. Limit shared materials to those you can easily clean and sanitize or disinfect. Children's books and other paper-based materials are not at high risk for spreading the virus.

CDC Transfer of Child Recommendations

The CDC has provided guidance for situations when a child must be transferred (i.e. daycare, visitation, etc). They provide the following guidance:

- Transfer child's items in a disposal bag.
- Have the child wear long-sleeve clothes.
- Change the child's clothing after a visit.
- Clothes should be placed in a plastic bag or washed in a washing machine.
- Thoroughly wash hands and any other areas of the body the child may have touched.

How to Report Exposure to COVID-19

If you, a household member or a child/youth are potentially exposed to COVID-19, immediately notify the DCYF caseworker.

Questions

If you have a question about visitation, please talk with your caseworker. If you have a contracted community provider, you can also talk with them about your concerns or questions. We will continue to provide support during this time. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

If you would like copies of this document in an alternative format or language, please contact DCYF Constituent Relations (1-800-723-4831 | 360-902-8060, ConstRelations@dcyf.wa.gov).