

Family Time Provider In-Person Visitation During COVID-19 Webinar Q&A

Thank you for participating in the Family Time Provider Webinar on May 19, 2020. These are unprecedented times; the fear of the unknown can be overwhelming. Communication is important and working together is key. In the webinar, we were not able to answer all of your questions. In order to be more responsive, we wanted to address some of the more pressing questions that were brought up. A more complete FAQ, that addresses all the questions and answers, will follow soon. We categorized the Q&A by the agenda items of the webinar. For any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to your regional lead or Deanna Morrison at Deanna.Morrison@dcyf.wa.gov.

Contracts and Waivers

Q: Is the expectation that as of today we are to resume face-to-face visits or are we waiting to resume face to face until May 31?

A: Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, visitation providers may exercise flexibility while facilitating parent-child visits to protect the health of visit participants and reduce the spread of COVID-19, in compliance with the Governor's Stay Home order. Providers may facilitate in-person visits if all visit participants follow the health protocols outlined in the DCYF Family Time Visit protocol.

Visits may be canceled and rescheduled or held remotely if visit participants do not follow the health protocols listed in the Family Time Visit protocol. Visits may also be conducted through video conferencing or other remote alternatives if all visit participants agree to remote visits and have the ability to participate remotely. The Family Time Visit protocol is posted at:

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/child-welfare-providers/contracted-services>.

The Family Time Visit protocol may change depending on updates to the Governor's Stay Home order. Updates to the Family Time Visit protocol will be posted on DCYF's website and DCYF will notify the Contractors to view the updates.

High-Risk Persons

Q: Are medically fragile children allowed to move to in-person visitation?

A: If the child or anyone who will be exposed to the child (parent, child, the caregiver that the child is living with and/or others in the caregiver's household) falls within one of these high-risk categories, DCYF will request that remote visitation occur instead of in-person. In this event, the caseworker should



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

contact the Department's counsel in that child's dependency case to immediately pursue a motion for remote visits.

According to the CDC, those at high risk for health problems from COVID-19 are:

- People age 65 years and older.
- People who are pregnant.
- People who have certain health conditions, such as weakened immune systems or respiratory conditions like severe asthma.

Guidance

Q: Do the screening questions need to occur before every visit? If someone has a symptom, how long do they need to have remote visitation?

A: Yes, this is answered in two parts:

Part 1: Screening Questions

The contracted Family Time Provider shall call the parent and the foster parent or caregiver, to confirm the visit (the day prior). On the call, the contracted Family Time Provider shall ask if anyone in the home is experiencing any of the following symptoms, per the 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.

If the responses of the parent, foster parent or caregiver to the screening questions are in the negative, the contracted Family Time Provider can move forward with the scheduled visit.

- If the responses to the screening questions are in the affirmative, the contracted Family Time Provider 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.

Part 2: Symptoms

If one of the participants answers the DOH screening questions in a manner that indicates they are sick, to reschedule to in-person, you must adhere to DOH timelines for when it is okay to no longer self-isolate.

- 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.

Q: Can in-person visitation start now?

A: Yes. In-person visitation should start now. While remote visits remain an option, we are asking caseworker and visit contractors to work with parents, foster parent and caregivers and children to move to in-person visits when they can be completed safely, based on the protocols.

COVID-19 Safety Protocols

Q: What about visits occurring in the parents' home? Will safety guidelines still apply? Who will have those conversations?

A: Yes, safety guidelines will apply. Both the caseworker and the visit supervisor will need to have these conversations with the parents to have them prepared for the in-home visit.

Q: Is a contracted provider in the position to say “no” to an in-person visit because they cannot meet the safety standards and/or they do not have PPE for visit participants?

A: To ensure the health and safety of children, families, parents, caregivers and staff, we have developed safety protocols based on guidance from DOH. Whenever a visit can meet those conditions, the visit should go forward in person. Where the conditions cannot be met (e.g., lack of adequate protective gear, not passing the DOH screening questions, etc.), then the visit can move to remote visitation until the conditions can be met for in-person visits.

If these health and safety protocols are not followed before and during visits, the in-person visit will be canceled and the contracted Family Time Provider will contact the caseworker immediately (within one business day). The contracted family time provider will work to reschedule the visit. Refer to the Protocol document for more details requirements and options.

Transportation Guidance

Q: We are serving multiple large sibling groups in two and three foster homes. If they aren't able to be transported in the same car, can they attend the visit together if transported in separate cars?

A: Yes, sibling visits should continue even if they are not placed in the same home together. Siblings that are attending visitation together may be transported in the same vehicle, even if they are from different households.

Q: Any recommendations on what type of cleaning solution providers should use on their personal cars? I'm concerned about bleach-based and other cleaners ruining/dyeing their upholstery, etc

A: The Washington State Department of Health provides guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting.

Current guidance from the CDC states that disinfectants should be registered by the EPA for use against the novel coronavirus. See **List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2**. 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.

Additional cleaning guidelines can also be found on their website and in the Protocol document.

Court Orders

Q: If a family is court-ordered to three visits per week for three hours, should we be providing all of these visits in person or should we do a combination of in-person and remote visitation?

A: Providers may facilitate in-person visits if all visit participants follow the health protocols outlined in the DCYF Family Time Visit protocol. Visits may be canceled and rescheduled or held remotely if visit participants do not follow the health protocols listed in the Family Time Visit protocol. Visits may also be conducted through video conferencing or other remote alternatives if all visit participants agree to remote visits and have the ability to participate remotely.

Provider Supports

Q: Will the retainer payment continue? How will we get masks and/or reimbursement for purchasing masks and cleaning supplies?

A: DCYF plans on continuing retainer payments for family time for the month of May. This is due to the likely combination of electronic and in-person visits for the remainder of May and a decrease in referrals. We will continue re-evaluating the retainer as the situation evolves but plan to move away from the retainer payment for June. More information will be shared on Tuesday, May 26 about the retainer. We will be adding an additional payment for each in-person visit conducted to compensate for cleaning time and supplies. DCYF will be supplying cloth masks for providers and families to participate in Family Time visitation. Any specific questions can be directed to Tim Kelly at Tim.kelly@dcys.wa.gov

Q: Are DCYF offices open to use visitation rooms?

A: The front lobbies may be closed but the caseworkers are still in the offices providing support to their caseloads and meeting timelines. Contact the office to discuss visitation room use options.