



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES**

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June 8, 2020
Letter to Parents

First, let me say I hope you and your family are safe and healthy as you read this letter. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we have been adjusting, like you, to the big changes in life during the last few months. We appreciate the optimism, flexibility and resilience of families during these difficult times. We understand that while some of you have appreciated the shift to virtual services, the pausing of in person services has been a hardship for others.

Based on the impact over time of COVID-19 in Washington State, and concern for the health and wellness of children and families receiving services and staff providing them, the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) state office has decided that in-person services, with limited exceptions, will continue to be paused.

We have heard that many of you who have made the shift to virtual services have enjoyed the flexibility, easier access to services and improved coaching from providers. There is much research that supports the effectiveness of virtual services, and this service delivery approach will continue to be an option.

If you are a parent who has decided to wait to receive services until they can be delivered in-person, I encourage you to give virtual services a try. *We want to be sure that important time is not lost during this period of rapid developmental change in your child's life.*

We are also aware that not all needs can be met through virtual services. In order to meet the individual needs of *all* children and families we are developing systems to identify exceptions for children who need time limited in-person services before there is a more widespread return to in-person services. We will be deciding where and how such services can be provided while ensuring the safety of children, parents and the staff providing services. If you believe your child is in need of these limited in-person services, please contact your service provider to discuss timelines and options that might be available.

To support planning for a safe return to in-person services, a small task group that includes both service providers and families, is meeting to develop a plan for ESIT that is in line with Gov. Inslee's Safe Start.

The goals for this task group include:

1. Developing recommendations for exceptions to be applied, that would allow a small group of infants and toddlers who have urgent, short term needs to receive in-person support.
2. Developing a plan for transitioning back to in-person services using a regional approach to be applied in line with Governor Inslee's Safe Start Plan.

Our plan will include feedback from ESIT service providers from across the state, and most

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importantly from families.

Very soon we will also be distributing a family survey that will help us to understand the experience and challenges of families who are receiving ESIT services during this most difficult time.

If you have questions, concerns, or ideas that you would like to share with the task group, please contact me at laurie.thomas@dcyf.wa.gov.

We are grateful for your patience as we work through this together.

Sincerely,

Laurie Thomas

Laurie Thomas
Administrator
Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program

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