

# Family Time In-Person Visitation Guidance During COVID-19

## *DCYF Staff*

Thank you for your continued dedication to supporting children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. We know these have been challenging times for everyone. As the state begins to open up, DCYF is committed to moving back to in-person visits. We are committed to working with all of you to resume in-person visits in a manner that takes into account the health and safety of all involved.

Based on consultation with the Department of Health (DOH), we are confident that some children can safely return to in-person visits soon. DCYF will work to reinstate in-person visits, but in light of other limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic, visits may still be provided through a combination of remote and in-person visits. Parents or their attorney will contact the assigned caseworker to request this transition.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks and cleaning products should be obtained through your regular supply order process.

DCYF is exploring options to locate additional masks and cleaning supplies; however, due to shortages of these items, families, caregivers, court partners and providers are encouraged to contribute these items to facilitate in-person visits.



## **People at High Risk for Serious Health Problems from COVID-19**

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.

If the child, or anyone who will be exposed to the child (parent, child or 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 contact the Department's counsel in that child's dependency case.

Separately, if you find out that someone in the household has underlying health conditions, you may refer them to the DOH Guidance for Persons Who are at Higher Risk for Serious Illness related to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) available online at [www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HigherRiskforSeriousIllness](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/NovelCoronavirusOutbreak2020/HigherRiskforSeriousIllness).



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

## 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 contracted Family Time Provider or caseworker (if they are supervising the visitation) 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 or caseworker shall 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.

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, foster parent or 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.

If a provider needs to change or cancel a visit, they will contact you immediately (within one business day). The caseworker will consult with the Department's counsel in that child's dependency case and if the caseworker decides that further in-person visits would be detrimental to the child's health, safety or welfare, the caseworker will pursue a motion to modify visits in the dependency case.

### On the Day of the Visit

Prior to the visit occurring or transporting the child, the contracted Family Time Provider 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 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. The caseworker will consult with the Department's counsel in that child's dependency case and if the caseworker decides that further in-person visits would be detrimental to the child's health, safety or welfare, the caseworker will pursue a motion to modify visits in the dependency case.

## 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](http://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 percent alcohol).
- Visitation is limited to the person(s) identified in the court's order on visits. If there are visitors that have been approved by the caseworker, 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 wiped down in the room and the toy/item should not go with the child back to their foster or caregiver home.
- The visit supervisor needs to practice social distancing during visitation. We do not expect that the parent and child(ren) will practice social distancing during a visitation.

If these health and safety protocols are not followed before and during visits, the in-person visit will be canceled and the Family Time Provider will contact the caseworker immediately (within one business day). The caseworker will consult with the Department's counsel in that child's dependency case and if the caseworker decides that further in-person visits would be detrimental to the child's health, safety or welfare, the caseworker will pursue a motion to modify visits in the dependency case.

## Reschedule a Visit

To reschedule to in-person, Family Time Providers and caseworkers shall adhere to DOH timelines for when it is okay to no longer self-isolate. DOH guidance ([www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/COVIDconcerned.pdf](http://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, they should stay home and away from others until:

- At least 3 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 for 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 caseworker should consult with the Department's counsel in that child's dependency case and if the caseworker decides that further in-person visits would be detrimental to the child's health, safety or welfare, the caseworker will pursue a motion to modify visits in the dependency case.

## Transportation Guidance

When transporting the child(ren) to and from visitation. The following guidance will 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.
- 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 to: [www.consumerreports.org/car-seats/how-to-safely-clean-coronavirus-from-your-childs-car-seat](http://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 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 all the visitation participants, the visitation rooms will be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected after every visit. Each DCYF office will designate a person(s) to be responsible to clean, sanitize and disinfect rooms used for visitation after every visit. Cleaning materials should be ordered through your regular supply order process.

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. See *List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2* online at [www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2](http://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-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 online at [osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/FactSheet\\_Cleaning\\_Final\\_UWDEOHS\\_0.pdf](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.

## Additional Guidance Documents

We have developed guidance documents to support the different parties involved in visitation. Below are links to those guidance documents:

- *Provider Guidance for In-Person Visits* (CWP\_0056): [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP\\_0056.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0056.pdf)
- *Parent Guidance for In-Person Visits* (CWP\_0057): [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP\\_0057.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0057.pdf)
- *Foster Parents and Caregiver Guidance for In-Person Visits* (CWP\_0058): [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP\\_0058.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0058.pdf)

## Questions

Communication during this time is essential. It is critical that you remain in touch with your Supervisor and Area Administrator with any challenges or successes.

For questions, contact Deanna Morrison, Permanency Planning/Visitation Program Manager at [Deanna.Morrison@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:Deanna.Morrison@dcyf.wa.gov).

We will continue to provide support to you during this time. Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

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