

Protocols for Family Based Safety Services and Family Reunification

We are committed to the safety and well-being of the children and families we serve in FBSS and during Family Reunification (FRE). The importance of the work you do to preserve families and secure child safety cannot be overstated.

FBSS and CVS caseworkers will continue to make contacts with families at the frequency required by policy.

These contacts, however, may be conducted virtually.

1. What does virtual contact look like?

When conducting a virtual contact you should follow the same policy for contacts as if you were in person. Ask similar questions and also ask for a tour of the home. You may ask the parent or caregiver to do a walkthrough of the home while carrying their device. Ensure that you have clear view of all rooms in the home, including the child's space as well as any areas of concern. You must assess safety, just as you would in an in person visit.

2. When is a face to face visit necessary?

If you are unable to complete a virtual visit to a family or if during a virtual visit there are safety concerns regarding the environment or otherwise indicating in-person contact is needed to ascertain child safety, you should staff with your supervisor and make a home visit.

Some additional factors to consider include:

- Vulnerability of the child or children
- The increased stress on the family due to the current circumstances
- Increased isolation of the family due to work, school or day care closures
- Inability of a family to utilize their safety network

Staffing cases up the chain of command for guidance and feedback is critical in making decisions about whether or not a home visit is needed.

When face to face visits are necessary, caseworkers should staff with their supervisors to determine the frequency warranted in a particular case.

3. When conducting face to face contacts you must follow the following guidance:

Upon arriving at the home, and while standing at the door/on the porch, maintain a distance of approximately six feet and ask the following:

- a. Have you traveled out of state in the last two weeks?
- b. Has anyone in the household tested positive for COVID-19?
- c. Have you had contact with anyone who could have been exposed to COVID-19 in the last two weeks?
- d. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (eg., cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath)?

If the answer to any of the above-listed questions is yes, encourage the family to contact a medical provider. You can assist them with making a call to 2-1-1.

When granted permission to enter the home, do so while remaining approximately six feet from persons inside.

Freely volunteer and share with the family your own personal answers to the above-listed questions in the spirit of transparency and to reassure the family who may be nervous about having someone come into contact with them during this period.

Given the present circumstances, while the duration of your home visits may decrease, your time inside the home is, as always, spent engaging with the family and assessing the safety of the home environment.

If the family is unwilling to allow you inside the home, ask them if they will assist you in completing a virtual home visit so you can observe any living or sleeping arrangements that should be assessed for safety.

Before the conclusion of the home visit, discuss virtual contact options for future contacts during the health crisis.

4. If I do a virtual contact, how should it be documented in IMPACT?

Virtual contacts should be documented as a face-to-face contact, not a telephone contact. The drop-down box selection regarding where the visit took place should be documented as the location of the person (child, parent, caregiver) you are having the virtual contact with. In the narrative

text field document that the contact was a virtual contact. Other documentation requirements remain the same.

5. What do I do about Family Group Conferences?

These meetings are important and should continue. However, until further notice, they should be conducted by conference calls.

6. What do I do if a family is uncooperative and will not allow either in person or virtual contact?

Continue to use your skills and current practices when engaging with resistant families, and staff with your supervisors as you normally would when you are unable to make contact.

In conclusion, please remember resources are being added almost daily to the **Safety Net COVID-19 resource page**. The agency's web site is also being continuously updated and contains information available for people who do not have access to the agency Safety Net.