

NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Division of Long Term Supports and Services

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Concord, NH 03301

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE Bureau for Family Centered Services GENERAL MEMORANDUM (GM)	
DATE:	09/17/2020
TO:	All BFCS staff and BFCS Provider Agencies' Staff
FROM:	Deirdre Dunn Tierney, Bureau Chief, Bureau for Family Centered Services (BFCS)
SIGNATURE:	
SUBJECT:	Home visits during COVID-19
GM NUMBER:	BFCS-COVID-19-005
EFFECTIVE DATE:	09/17/2020
REGULATORY GUIDANCE:	This memo is a communication tool circulated for informational purposes only. The goal is to provide information and guidance to the individuals to whom it is addressed. The contents of this memo and the information conveyed are subject to change. This communication is not intended to take the place of or alter written law, regulations or rule.

MEMORANDUM SUMMARY
<p>The purpose of the memorandum is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to concerns from stakeholders relative to the provision of in-person home visits during the COVID-19 Emergency. • Provide resources to assist community agencies with their decision-making processes. <p>This memorandum does NOT imply that services should or should not be provided in-person at this time. This decision remains the responsibility of each community agency within the unique circumstances of their regional area.</p>

The following information is based on the most current guidance from NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services (DPHS), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Leadership Institute for CYSHCN Directors (LICD), the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center, and the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Maternal & Child Health Bureau. The health and safety of children, families, and staff is the priority. This guidance is for informational purposes only and the decision of whether or not to provide in-person visits remains the responsibility of each agency.

During the Governor's "Stay at Home" order, many BFCS agencies reported temporary cessation of in-person home visits. To assure families' needs were being met, home visits have been offered over the phone or through video communication. When providing virtual home visits, home visitors have worked hard to make services and communications as effective as if they were in person.

Following the release of the Governor's Economic Re-Opening Taskforce "Stay at Home 2.0" plan, there has been an increase in the number of families requesting in-person visits by BFCS program providers/staff including Partners in Health, Health Care Coordination, and Family Centered Early Supports & Services. Deciding whether or not to offer in-person visits can be daunting, since there is no precedent to reference. To assist agencies with making this decision, the Bureau has compiled a list of resources at the end of this document that includes the following considerations from the Health Resources & Services Administration:

- What is the purpose of the in-person home visit during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
- What are the risks to staff, children, and families?
- What precautions can be put in place for staff, children, and families?
- How are staff managing stress and self-care?

If your agency decides to provide in-person home visits, review and develop a process to screen staff before they enter the workplace or before they go on home visits; based on the [Universal Guidelines](#) for All New Hampshire Employers and Employees that were issued with the Stay at Home 2.0 plan that include:

- **Wash hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- **Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer** with at least 60% alcohol., if soap and water are not readily available,
- **Cover coughs or sneezes** with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and clean hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer (if soap and water are not readily available). Alternatively, cough or sneeze into elbows.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth** with unwashed hands.
- Children, families, and staff, should be reminded to **maintain a distance of at least 6 feet** from others whenever possible.
- **All staff and adults in the home or workplace should be asked to wear a cloth face covering** over their nose and mouth where other individuals are present.
- **Stay home** when you are sick. Staff should not conduct any home visits if they have any symptoms of illness or have been exposed to anyone with symptoms of illness.
- **Avoid contact** with people who are sick. Staff should contact each parent prior to conducting the home visit to confirm no one in the home is showing any signs of illness or has been in contact with someone showing signs of illness and ask permission to come. If anyone is ill or if the family is uncomfortable with visitors, the visit should be cancelled or provide an alternate method of service delivery such as a phone call or virtual visit.

As always, continue to check [NH's COVID-19](#) and [CDC](#) websites for updated information.

RESOURCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

CDC, Guidance for Direct Service Providers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html>

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, Considerations for Increasing In-Person Activities and making Infrastructure Adjustments for Part C During COVID-19

<https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/disaster/coronavirus-re-opening-part-c.pdf>

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, Remote Service Delivery and Distance Learning

<https://ectacenter.org/topics/disaster/tele-intervention.asp>

New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Public Health Services

<https://www.nh.gov/covid19/>

New Hampshire Safer at Home

<https://www.covidguidance.nh.gov/>

United States Department of Education, Q&A on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>

United States Health Resources & Services Administration, Maternal & Child Health Bureau, Important Home Visiting Information During COVID-19

<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/Home-Visiting-Information-During-COVID-19>

Universal Guidelines

<https://www.covidguidance.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt381/files/files/inline-documents/guidance-universal.pdf>