



Parenting Time During COVID-19: Strategically Using In-Person and Virtual Visits

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Ohio

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Webinar Objectives

- Review of current Federal and Ohio parent/child visitation policy
 - The importance of in-person visits
 - How to determine when in-person visits can occur
 - Safety during in-person visits
 - Supporting parents and caregivers
 - Best Practices virtual visits – recommendations by age
 - Sharing ideas, resources and discussing the challenges
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Resources

- All the resources from this webinar will be provided to the participants and available to others.
- PowerPoint
- Videos
- Handouts

[Ohio Supreme Court COVID website](#)



Federal Children's Bureau

March 27, 2020

- ALL legal mandates continue.
- In all cases, title IV-E requires that the following hearings be held and determinations made:
 - Contrary to the welfare (CTW) /Best Interest (BI) (Ex parte emergency order, Shelter Care Orders, Dependency Orders)
 - Reasonable efforts at the time of removal (Shelter Care Orders, Dependency Orders, Permanency Planning Orders)
 - Annual Reasonable efforts to finalize the permanency plan (ARE) (Dependency Review Orders, Permanency Planning Orders)
 - Six-month review and 12-month permanency hearings

Visitation plans are reviewed at these hearings



- Children kept in communication with their attorneys/CASA/GAL
- Timely notice to all parties
- Refrain from blanket orders (blanket request for no visits)
- Ensure all have access to technology and know how to use it
- Stipulated orders (agreed), when possible



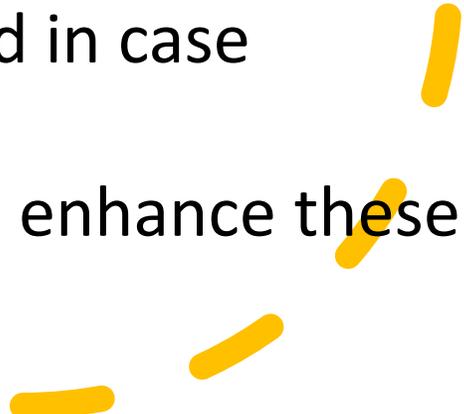
- Ensure that family time continues;
- Become familiar with ways in which in-person visitation may continue to be held safely;
- Consider the use of family members to supervise contact and to engage in visitation outdoors;
- Encourage Foster Parents to support visits of all types.
- **Lack of, or inability to access, treatment or services due to provider closures during the pandemic should not be interpreted as a lack of parental compliance**

Ohio Department Jobs and Family Services

Guidance on Parenting Time

- Conduct case-by-case assessment
 - Children with medically fragile, pre-existing health concerns, and the age of child
 - When case-by-case decisions are made to limit in-person visitation, replace and increase interactions and contact by virtual visits
- Reduce those involved in the visit to only those who are court-mandated to participate.
- Consider adjusting visits with siblings and other external family members to virtual
- For supervised visitation determined necessary to take place in agency offices and other community locations

The Importance of Visits and Connections

- **Reasonable Efforts/Reunification Services**
 - Services to parents and children to support safety and reunification
 - Therapy
 - Addiction services
 - Parenting classes
 - Visitation/Parenting Time is most critical of all services
 - **Family Connections are our first resources**
 - Non-offending; non-custodial parent
 - Relatives identified and engaged in case planning/support
 - Children's rights – maintain and enhance these connections
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In-Person Visits

- Responsible Restart Ohio – phased approach
 - Need for Ohio Child Welfare to have a phased approach to restarting in-person visits
 - Connections is the True Goal!
 - *Protecting family integrity may seem like an expendable effort – something to be put aside until the world changes. The fact is, every day that goes by with restrictions on family time, reduced availability of treatment or other services for parents and delays in reunification efforts is a threat to family integrity.*
- Jerry Milner – Federal CB*



Virtual Visits* cannot replace these Attachment Activities

- Human touch
- Ability to meeting the child's immediate needs such as feeding, comforting, and bathing.
- To hear a parent's heartbeat
- To smell a parent
- To practice teaching, supervising and disciplining one's child

Scientists believe the most important factor in creating attachment is positive physical contact. Dr. Bruce Perry

** VV when there is live audio and visual interaction*

Children in most need of in-person visits

- Infants and toddlers; under the age of 3.
- Any child who is at the developmental age of an infant or toddler.
- Children who have experienced chronic trauma or child traumatic stress.
- Children with deficits that interferes with their ability to relate to the parent through VV technology i.e. attention deficit, visual or hearing impairments, severe mental health or behavioral health issues, etc.





Situations where VV are not effective

- VV are occasional, inconsistent, or do not allow for adequate time between parent and child.
- The caregiving parent cannot or will not provide emotional, physical and technology support to the child during a VV.
- VV cannot meet best practice recommendations.
- Resources needed for VV are not available.

Questions to determine In-Person or Virtual Visits

1. COVID19 exposure
2. Child health problem
3. Adult health problem
4. VV are not effective
5. Close to reunification
6. Under the age of 3
7. Were having safe in-person visits prior to stay at home
8. Lack access to VV resources
9. Child having new/increased behavior problems

See Handout: Questions for In-Person visits

Caregivers and parents – resisting visits

- This is temporary and exceptional – need to be flexible
- Talk to the parent about their fears, emotions and concerns.
- Address their fears.
 - Provide current information on COVID19 from public health authorities.
- Discuss impact on the child who do not have visits. Including the possibility of the child having increased negative reactions or behaviors.

Caregivers and parents – resisting visits

- Use a phased-in approach.
- Have a joint meeting with birth parent and caregiver to develop compromises and ways to decrease the impact on the caregiver.
- Residential Facilities that resist visits
- [Ohio Questions and Answers](#) has information on current visitation questions and answers

The goal is to support the parent and caregiver to enable them to support visits of all types.

Child Transfer recommendations

- Wash hands before, during and after visits
- Be careful when diapering or helping a child with toileting
- Toys should not be transferred. If child needs comfort item (blanket, stuff animal) wash after the visit.
- Place dirty clothes, blankets etc. in a plastic bag after use, wash after visit.
- Transfer child's items in disposal bag



Child Transfer recommendations

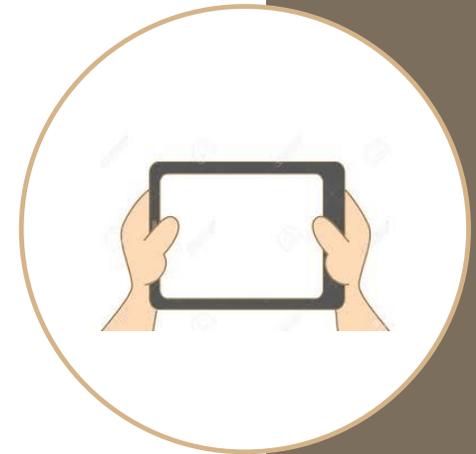
- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants, change clothes after visit
- Wash any area of your body that the child has touched
- Everyone wear a cloth covering when in public or cannot maintain safe distance
 - No cloth covering for children under the age of two
 - No cloth covering for people with breathing problems



When In-person contact is not possible

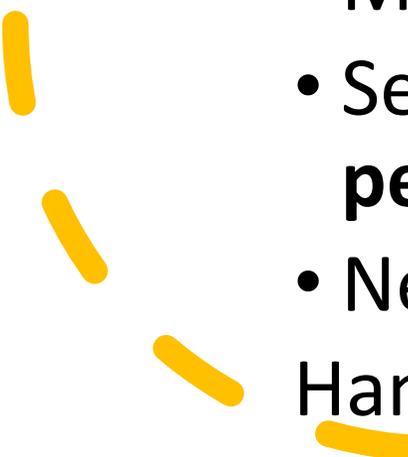
Some options are more powerful than others.

1. Audio and visual (**Virtual Visits**) – Skype, Facetime, Zoom, Facebook messenger
2. Audio only – phone calls
3. Text only – live – SMS, chat apps and even email when done with immediately interaction
4. Recordings – no live interaction – recordings using audio and/or visual
5. Written – US mail, email, and other forms of written communication





The Good News! Virtual Parenting Time

- No transportation issues
 - Easier supervision and observation
 - Less conflicts in scheduling
 - No small visit rooms
 - Monitors, visit supervisors, coaches can continue services
 - Sessions can be recorded for learning purposes – **with permission**
 - New courts orders not needed in most cases
- Handout: Long distance activities for parents
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Virtual Visits – technology

- Zoom, skype, facetime, Facebook messenger, and more
- Check with parent, caregiver and youth what method they have access to or would like to use
- Confidentially – yours and theirs
- Check if they have equipment, internet, data plan and know how to use it
- Purchase or provide what is needed
- Use online games, books – MANY resources available for free



Virtual Visits – Best Practices

- Develop a VV plan
 - All parties
- Selecting the platform and applications
 - Share ideas
 - Demonstrate what can occur
- Equipment
 - What is available
 - What is needed
- Planning a virtual visit
 - Goal of a VV
 - Preparation
 - Reasonable expectations



Making VV effective

- PRACTICE and patience ---- comfort and normalizing this type of visit takes time
- Do not expect a perfect visit
- Small moments matter most
- Direct eye contact
 - look at web camera,
 - do not expect direct eye contact the entire visit
- Keep talking even if the child is not directly interacting with you
- Watch the child play and interact with others
- Limit distractions

Handout: Virtual Visit Recommendations

Video



- Parent, caregiver and worker on VV – setting expectations for visits
- <https://youtu.be/lrI1--720m0>

Infants



- Frequency: Daily contact 10-15 minutes using virtual visits
- Senses infants use to bond: parent's eyes, voice, odor and feeding
- Caregiver is the heart and hands of the parent during the visit
- Prepare and agreement between adults when and how to have visits
- When baby is old enough to self feed do some visits during meals
- Adults can talk about the child during visit: routines, health, changes in abilities, etc.

Toddlers to Pre-schoolers



- Frequency: Daily 15 -20 minutes
- If new to virtual visits the child may not understand, at first, that their parent is not a TV show.
- May touch the screen to try to touch parent.
- Need LOTS of different activities
- PREPARE – books, games, songs, toys
- Allow the child to move
- Meals together
- Ask the child to show you things in their room
- Caregiver participation

Video – VV with a toddler

- Reading a book to a toddler
- <https://youtu.be/x-B7Tvd-Egc>



School Age



- Frequency: 3-4 times a week (daily is better) 30-45 minutes
- Talk to child about school, friends, what they are doing during quarantine
- Talk to child about their fears of the virus, your health and all the changes
- Let the child teach you about apps
- Homework, teach a skill, play online games together, writing stories, virtual field trips and much more
- Engage the child in planning visits – make them fun

Video

- Parent and children – Saying goodbye at the end of a virtual visit
- <https://youtu.be/FuOSxABUCo>



Teens to Young Adults



- Frequency: at least once a week. As much time as the youth wants.
- Help the youth maintain contacts with friends, school, therapy and other activities.
- Check how the youth is feeling and managing their stress.
- Allow the youth to select how to do the visits

Teens to Young Adults



- You cannot control a youth. Help them make good decisions.
- Behavioral reactions are normal, especially for youth who have experienced traumas. Help them by modeling calm behaviors. Model ways to handle stress.
- Let the youth know that you will be there to help them through this crisis.
- Resource: Youth Law Center webinar

Supervision and Coaching: during Family Time Virtual Visits

- Supervision, coaching, monitoring and observing can occur with the use of some apps.
- Chat feature that only the parent can see.
- Use agency and contracted visitation services to schedule and support virtual visits.
- PCSA caseworker can “drop in” on virtual visits being supervised by others
- Recording of visits for learning purposes – **with everyone’s consent**

Roles & Responsibilities-Parents



- More frequent but shorter virtual visits
- Opportunities to grow and learn during virtual visits
- Help the child understand COVID19
- Help the child during this time
- Help the child understand rules of an in-person visit
- Talk to the child about their emotions and fears
- Be prepared for visits – activities, what you want to talk about, collaborate with caregiver

Roles & Responsibilities- Caregivers



- Visits support the child's well-being and minimize traumatic and behavioral reactions
- Requires caregiver's participation for virtual visits
- Be the heart and hands of the parent on VV
- Help the child understand COVID19 and rules of in-person visits
- Less issues with travel, school disruption; routines, meals
- Confidentiality can be maintained
- Opportunity to collaborate with parent

Professionals

- Stay in contact with clients/families
 - Develop individualized visit plans for each family
 - More frequent but shorter visits
 - Some in-person visits will be needed/required
 - Help adults and children talk about and manage their fears and concerns
- Creativity is key
 - Many free resources
 - Look for solutions the children and families are counting on us
- Take care of yourself and your colleagues



Questions/Discussions

- Use chat to write your questions.
 - Ideas
 - Questions
 - Resources
 - Challenges
 - What is working?

A red octagonal sign with a black border, containing the text "Check if any policy, directive or guidance has changed".

Check if any
policy,
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Resources

Ohio Websites

- [Ohio Supreme Court – Coronavirus Resources](#)
- [Ohio Department of Job & Family Services – COVID-19 Information for Local Agencies](#)

Dependency Related Resources:

- [National Association of Counsel for Children – COVID-19 Resource Hub](#)
- [Children’s Bureau – COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [American Bar Association: Tips to Ensure Your Child Clients Have Access to Technology](#)

Plan for the
future:

The future is
here!

We have to stand on guard and prepare for the aftermath of our current crisis. One, two, three or even 12 months from now, we will continue to deal with the results of the virus and the manner in which it has affected our system. Should restrictions on family time and services continue, a significant amount of time may pass before parents and children are properly served.

Jerry Milner – Children’s Bureau