

# DCF GUIDANCE on In-Person Family Time for Foster and Kinship Foster Families

**EFFECTIVE: July 13, 2020**

**UPDATED: June 22, 2021**

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) believes strongly in the importance of children and families having time to be together in person. This document updates previous guidance for parent/child visits, or Family Time, as DCF has resumed all routine in-person contact with the number of COVID-19 cases declining. The following builds on current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

<b>Scheduling Family Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The social worker will be in contact with the parent and foster parent to schedule a date, time and location for the in-person family time.</li><li>• If you, someone in your household or the child have a medical condition let your family resource social worker (or the child’s social worker) know.</li></ul>
<b>Pre-screening/Conditions that Must be Met for In-Person Family Time</b>	<p>The day before, and the day of Family Time, please pre-screen the child and anyone planning to transport the child before leaving for the Family Time. If the Social Worker is transporting the child, they will ask these questions about the child and foster family household members. In order to ensure the safety of everyone involved, in-person Family Time should not occur if anyone involved answers yes to any of the following screening questions: :</p> <p>Have you tested positive for or been diagnosed by a health care provider with COVID-19 in the last 10 days?</p> <p>Have you been advised by health care provider public health agency to self-quarantine in the last 14 days?</p> <p>Have you had close contact with someone experiencing symptoms or someone with known exposure to COVID-19?</p> <p>Have you been tested and are awaiting results after experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone positive for COVID-19 or who was experiencing symptoms?</p> <p>Do you have newly developed symptoms that cannot otherwise be attributed to another condition: cough, fever greater than 100°F, fatigue, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle aches or pain, runny nose or congestion, chills, or new loss of taste or smell?</p>

	<p>Have you traveled outside of Massachusetts without quarantining for 14 days and/or received a negative COVID-19 test result?</p> <p>If the answer is yes to any of these questions the in-person visit needs to be canceled. Please call the child’s social worker and try to arrange telephone or video conferencing Family Time until the risk of COVID-19 transmission resolves.</p>
<p><b>Preparing for Family Time</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster parents should prepare the children over the age of 5 for the need to wear a face covering throughout the Family Time and let them know their parents may be wearing one.</li> <li>• Depending on the age and developmental stage If the child, you may want to use a virtual Family Time before in-person Family Time for the parent to show the child what they look like with the facemask on.</li> <li>• While COVID-19 infections are currently declining, in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19, outdoor Family Time is encouraged. Please plan and dress your foster child accordingly.</li> <li>• Parents, and social workers, and foster parents, if applicable, should prepare for Family Time by discussing age-appropriate activities that can be done outside or inside, separately but together, with social distancing and determine who will bring any supplies needed for the activity. Possible activities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Batting around balloons</li> <li>o Drawing with sidewalk chalk</li> <li>o Doing a puzzle or playing a game together but having only one person touch the pieces</li> <li>o Going for a walk where it’s possible to practice physical distancing</li> <li>o Coloring together, but on different pages, or books</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Supplies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following supplies should be available from the Department for the family visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Disinfecting wipes and/or other disinfecting cleaning products</li> <li>o Soap and running water or hand sanitizer</li> <li>o Cloth face coverings or disposable masks for participants to wear if they are not fully vaccinated. If the child does not have a mask, the Department will provide one.</li> <li>o Gloves (medical grade nitril or latex)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Transportation to and from Family Time</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anyone who is self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19+ individual or self-isolating because they are sick, <b>SHOULD NOT</b> provide transportation to Family Time.</li> <li>• If possible, the same person should transport the child for each Family Time.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone in the vehicle older than five years should wear a facemask/cloth face covering while in the vehicle, except for anyone for whom use of a face mask/cloth face covering would be damaging to their health, or, anyone who is developmentally unable to use a face mask/covering.</li> <li>• Children should be in the back seat utilizing car and booster seats when applicable.</li> <li>• No more than two children should be transported together unless they live in the same household.</li> <li>• If the weather allows, windows should be opened slightly to support air flow. If this is not possible, set the ventilation system to high in the vehicle and do not recirculate conditioned air.</li> <li>• The person providing transportation should bring the child to the agreed upon Family Time location. No one outside of the vehicle should touch the door handles, car seats, or vehicle’s interior.</li> <li>• Frequently-touched areas of the vehicle should be wiped down with disinfectant between transportation and after travel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Car seats, buckles and latches should be wiped down before and after transport.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Precautions to Take During Family Time**

<p><b>Masks Face Coverings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Time participants who are fully vaccinated do not need to wear masks for indoor or outdoor family time.</li> <li>• Fully vaccinated participants do not need to wear masks when eating or participating in Family Time activities with others who are fully vaccinated.</li> <li>• If Family Time is taking place in locations other than the Area Office, participants are required to observe face covering, social distancing, and related policies in effect at these sites.</li> <li>• Everyone older than age 5 who is not fully vaccinated must wear a face mask/covering over the nose and mouth, except for anyone for who use of a face mask/covering would be damaging to their health, or anyone who is developmentally unable to use a face mask/covering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parents can briefly remove their face covering to remind the child or youth of who they are.</li> <li>○ Participants may briefly remove their face coverings for eating and drinking.</li> <li>○ If the child takes off their face mask/covering they should be encouraged by the adults to keep it on. No visit will be cancelled if the child refuses to keep the face mask/covering on.</li> <li>○ If a break from wearing the mask is needed, it should be done away from other people and outside.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<p>All Family Time participants should follow the CDC guidelines regarding the use of disposable or cloth face coverings, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washing hands before putting the face covering on</li> <li>• Making sure both mouth and nose are covered</li> <li>• Hooking the loops around ears or tying the face covering snugly around the head</li> <li>• Refraining from touching the face covering or pulling it down during use</li> <li>• Removing the face covering without touching eyes, nose, or mouth and immediately washing hands or applying hand sanitizer after removal</li> <li>• Washing the cloth face covering between uses and ensuring it is completely dry before using it again</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social Distancing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the Family Time visit is in a home, the largest room should be used if possible to maximize distance and windows should be open to allow air circulation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhanced Cleaning and/or Disinfecting Procedures</b></p>	<p>Everyone should wash and/or sanitize their hands and surroundings right before the in-person Family Time, regularly throughout the family time, and immediately after Family Time is done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone should wash and/or sanitize their hands before putting on a face mask/covering PPE and after they take it off.</li> <li>• Everyone should clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as car doors, steering wheels, door knobs, phones, and pens.</li> <li>• Foster parents may want to bring/provide toys (that can be easily cleaned and disinfected) that are familiar to the child. If the parent is going to play with these toys, they will need to be disinfected at the beginning and the end of the In-person Family Time. Toys that cannot be cleaned, sanitized, or washed immediately after family time should not be used. Children’s books and other paper-based materials like envelopes are not considered high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfecting.</li> </ul> <p>When washing, feeding, or holding young children, adults can protect themselves by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wearing layers of clothing, which can be taken off after a visit</li> <li>• Wearing long hair up off the collar in a ponytail or other updo</li> <li>• Washing their hands, neck and other places touched by a child’s secretions</li> <li>• Changing the child’s clothes if secretions (e.g., drool) are on the child’s clothes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changing the adult’s top if there are secretions on it and washing their hands again</li><li>• Placing contaminated items in a plastic bag or immediately washing them in a washing machine</li></ul> <p>When the child returns from Family Time, you should use the same precautions you use when anyone in your household has had contact with people outside your house, such as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Have them wash their hands when they first return</li><li>b. Changing the clothing they were wearing</li><li>c. Taking a shower or bath</li></ol>
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**References for this Document**

**CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION:**

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/ncd-extra-precautions/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>