

## Guidance for In-Person Family Time for Social Workers

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The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to safely provide in-person Family Time for children and youth in placement. DCF recognizes spending time with parents, siblings, and family members is a vital part of maintaining and strengthening family and cultural connections for children in care. These guidelines apply whether the Family Time is outdoor or indoors and follow recommendations from the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to ensure the safety of all participants and to prevent further spread of COVID-19. Virtual Family Time contact provides an opportunity for children and parents to communicate more frequently. Virtual Family Time can supplement, but should not replace, in-person visits. **The guidance below is the same for indoor and outdoor Family Time unless otherwise noted.**

<b>Scheduling Family Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social worker should contact the parents and caregiver/provider to schedule a date, time, and location for in-person Family Time and confirm who will be attending Family Time.</li> <li>• <u>Determine Family Time Location:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If the weather is appropriate, try to schedule Family Time in an outside space when possible.</li> <li>○ If the visit will occur in the Area Office, social workers should talk to their supervisor and/or AAM about capacity for holding visits in the office.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Before scheduling Family Time, social workers should be clear with all participants that they will need to answer screening questions and follow the guidelines below for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated participants.</li> <li>• While vaccination can help prevent the spread of COVID-19, a family should not be required to be vaccinated (or show proof of vaccination) as a condition of visitation.</li> <li>• Understandably, parents and caregivers may have questions related to these guidelines. It is important to spend time answering questions and ensuring everyone understands the guidelines and expectations.</li> <li>• Make sure to coordinate and work collaboratively with caregivers and placement providers to address issues that may arise related to in-person Family Time. If the individual facilitating Family Time identifies issues or concerns during the visit (e.g. an adult disclosing they are not vaccinated and refusing to wear a mask) it will be important for them to stay in communication and coordinate with network specialists, lead agencies, or the ARC to resolve any concerns.</li> </ul>
<b>Conditions that Must Be Met for In-Person Family Time</b>	In order to ensure the safety of everyone involved, the following conditions must be met for anyone attending in-person Family Time:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No one is COVID-19+, is in isolation due to being COVID-19+, and has not been instructed by their health care provider that they are ready to leave isolation*</li> <li>• No one has been in close contact with someone who is COVID-19+ and is now in quarantine for 14 days. If someone in quarantine** gets tested and the result is negative, they still need to complete the 14-day quarantine and cannot visit until the quarantine period has ended.</li> <li>• No one has symptoms of COVID-19: Cough, fever greater than 100°F, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, chills, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.</li> <li>• If anyone in the child’s foster home has tested positive for COVID-19, the visit must be postponed until the quarantine period for the home has ended. Please refer to CDC and DPH guidance for details on quarantine requirements. If the child’s congregate care setting is experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 (recent concerns include outbreaks of cases, usually &gt;2, among staff or youth), the visit must be postponed. This information is readily available from congregate care teams who are monitoring all outbreaks.</li> <li>• If a person tested positive, met the isolation requirement, and continues to test positive, please contact your regional nurse to discuss when the visit may be scheduled. If a child, adult, or household member has concerns about a medical condition, supervisors and managers should be made aware prior to the visit, whenever possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preparing for Family Time</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregivers should prepare children over the age of 5 for the need to wear a face covering throughout Family Time and let them know their parents will also be wearing one.</li> <li>• If a parent is wearing a face mask to visits, depending on the age and developmental stage of the child, you or the foster parent 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 a face mask on.</li> <li>• Parents and social workers can prepare for visitation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pre-planning activities.</li> <li>○ Gathering and bringing what is needed to participate in the chosen activities, including weather appropriate clothing if the visit is occurring outdoors. For suggestions of age-appropriate activities that can be done outside or inside, from a distance, or separately but together: see the <a href="#">Indoor Family Time Tip Sheet for Social Workers</a> or the <a href="#">Resource Guide of Recreational Areas for Family Time Visits</a> on the intranet.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>Pre-Screening Questions to Ask</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants should be screened by telephone or video 1 day prior to a visit. If a child is being transported for a visit, screening questions should be asked of the household where the child resides before the transport occurs.</li> <li>• All participants will also be screened in person at the time of visit.</li> <li>• Screening questions to ask include:</li> </ul> <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, sore throat, 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 a parent or child (or their caregiver) answers yes to any of these questions the in-person visit cannot occur and will need to be rescheduled or conducted virtually.</p>
<p><b>Supplies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following supplies should be available for the family visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disinfecting wipes and/or other disinfecting cleaning products</li> <li>• Soap and running water or hand sanitizer</li> <li>• Cloth face coverings or disposable facemasks for participants who are not fully vaccinated to wear. If a participant does not have a mask, one will be provided to them.</li> <li>• 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>• If possible, the same person should transport the child to each Family Time.</li> <li>• Everyone in the vehicle older than 5 years should wear a facemask/cloth face covering while in the vehicle, except for anyone for whom use of a facemask/cloth face covering would be damaging to their health or anyone who is developmentally unable to use a facemask/cloth face covering.</li> <li>• Children should sit in the back seat, utilizing car and booster seats when applicable.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 or heated 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.</li> <li>• For car seats, buckles and latches should be wiped down before and after transport.</li> <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> </ul>
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**Precautions to Take During Family Time**

<p><b>Facemasks/Cloth Face Coverings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCF social workers must follow the Department’s <a href="#">Face Covering Guidance</a> during Family Time.</li> <li>• Family Time participants (e.g. parents) 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. 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>• Family Time participants above the age of 5 who are not fully vaccinated must wear a facemask/cloth face covering over the nose and mouth, unless the use of a facemask/cloth face covering would be damaging to the person’s health or anyone who is developmentally unable to use a facemask/cloth face covering.</li> <li>• Parents can briefly pull down their face covering to remind the child or youth of who they are.</li> </ul> <p>Participants may pull down their face coverings for a brief time when eating and drinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the child takes off their facemask/cloth face covering they should be encouraged by the adults to keep it on. No visit will be cancelled if the child refuses to keep the facemask/cloth face covering on. If a break from wearing a mask is needed for an adult, do so away from other people and outside.</li> <li>• All Family Time participants should follow the CDC guidelines regarding the use of disposable or cloth face coverings, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washing hands before putting the face covering on</li> <li>• Make 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> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing the face covering without touching eyes, nose, or mouth and immediately washing hands after removal</li> <li>• Washing the face covering between uses and ensuring it is completely dry before using it again.</li> </ul>
<b>Maintaining Distance When Possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the visit is in a home/apartment, the largest room should be used if possible, to maximize distance and windows should be open to allow air circulation.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhanced Cleaning and/or Disinfecting Procedures</b>	<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 wash and/or sanitize their hands right before the in-person Family Time, regularly throughout the visit, and immediately after the visit is done.</li> <li>• Everyone should clean frequently touched surfaces, such as car doors, steering wheels, doorknobs, phones, and pens.</li> <li>• 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> <li>• When washing, feeding, or holding young children, adults can protect themselves by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Wearing layered clothing that can be removed 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> <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> </li> </ul>

\* **Isolation** - The separation or restriction of activities of an ill person with symptoms or with a confirmed diagnosis of a contagious disease from those who are well.

\*\***Quarantine** - The separation or restriction of movement of well persons who might have been exposed to a communicable disease while determining if they become ill.

**References for this Document**

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-mask-requirements>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>