

DCF GUIDANCE on In-Person Family Time for Foster and Kinship Foster Families Effective: July 13th 2020

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) believes strongly in the importance of children and families having time to be together in person. DCF is instituting a plan to resume in-person Family Time while continuing to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and keep children, families, foster families, and staff safe. This document provides guidance and the requirements that will allow in-person family time to begin. In developing these requirements, the DCF built upon existing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), as well as input from families, kinship and unrelated foster families, our contracted providers, and our sister child serving agencies.

<p>Scheduling Family Time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Family Time will be limited to no more than 6 participants in total, including family members and children. This limit does not include specialized staff to assist with the visit or the staff supervising the visit. • During the initial phase of reintroducing in-person family time, all in-person family time will occur in outside space. <p>If you, someone in your household or the child are high risk let your Family Resource Social Worker (or the child’s Social Worker) know.</p>
<p>Conditions that Must Be Met for In-Person Family Time</p>	<p>In order to ensure the safety of everyone involved, in-person Family Time should not occur if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone involved 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. * • Anyone involved 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. • Anyone involved who has symptoms of COVID-19: Cough, fever greater than 100.4 F, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, chills, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. <p>Additionally, children and adults in the following high risk categories may need to take additional precautions or participate in virtual visits only: individuals who are >65 years old, are immunocompromised or on immune-suppressing medications, or have serious medical conditions such as heart disease, chronic lung disease, and pregnant women.</p>

	<p>If you, someone in your household or the child are high risk let your Family Resource Social Worker (or the child's Social Worker) know.</p>
<p>Preparing for Family Time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster Parents should prepare children over the age of 2 for the need to wear a face covering throughout the Family Time and let them know their parents will also be wearing one. • Depending on the age and developmental stage of 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 a face mask on. • Parents, Social Workers, and Foster Parents, if applicable, should prepare for Family Time by discussing age appropriate activities that can be done outside together with social distancing and determining who will bring any supplies needed for the activity. Possible activities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Batting around balloons ○ Drawing with sidewalk chalk ○ Doing a puzzle or playing a game together but having only one person touch the pieces ○ Going for a walk where it's possible to practice physical distancing ○ Coloring together, but on different pages, or books • Any food brought to Family Time should be in disposable containers only and in portions limited to what the child can eat during the visit, as no food will be brought back with the child.
<p>Pre-Screening Questions</p>	<p>The day before, and the day of Family Time, please pre-screen the child(ren) and anyone planning to transport the child before leaving for Family Time. If the Social Worker is transporting the child, they will ask these questions about the child and foster family household members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the child COVID-19+recommended to be in isolation and has not been told by their Primary Care Provider (PCP) that they are ready to leave isolation? • Has the child 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 be in quarantine for 14 days). • Does the child, or anyone in the child's foster home, have symptoms of COVID-19: cough, fever>100.4, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, chills, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell? <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>Supplies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following supplies should be available for the family visit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disinfecting wipes and/or other disinfecting cleaning products

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Soap and running water or hand sanitizer ○ Cloth face coverings or disposable masks for all participants to wear . If the child does not have a mask, the Department will provide one. ○ Gloves (medical grade nitril or latex)
<p>Transportation to and from Family Time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who is self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19+ individual or is self-isolating because they are sick, SHOULD NOT provide transportation to Family Time. • If possible, the same person should transport the child to each Family Time. • Everyone in the vehicle older than two years should wear a cloth face mask/covering while in the vehicle, except for anyone for whom use of a face mask/covering would be damaging to their health, or, anyone who is developmentally unable to use a face mask/covering. • Children should be in the back seat utilizing car and booster seats when applicable. • No more than two children should be transported together unless they live in the same household. • 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. • 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. • Frequently-touched areas of the vehicle should be wiped down with disinfectant between transportation and after travel. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Car seats, buckles and latches should be wiped down before and after transport.
<p>Precautions to Take During Family Time</p>	
<p>Face Coverings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone older than two must wear a face mask/covering over the nose and mouth, except for anyone for whom 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"> ○ Parents can briefly remove their face covering to remind the child or youth of who they are. ○ Participants may briefly remove their face coverings for eating and drinking. ○ 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. <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"> • Washing hands before putting the face covering on • Making sure both mouth and nose are covered • Hooking the loops around ears or tying the face covering snugly around the head

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refraining from touching the face covering or pulling it down during use • Removing the face covering without touching eyes, nose, or mouth and immediately washing hands or applying hand sanitizer after removal • Washing the cloth face covering between uses and ensuring it is completely dry before using it again
Maintaining Distance When Possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging that physical contact may be desired by parents and children who have not seen each other for several months, visits will be monitored with risk reduction in mind. Parents are being advised to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid close face-to-face contact and kissing, • Hug with faces in the opposite direction or hugging legs is preferred • Limit close physical contact to less than 15 minutes • Have participants above the age of 2 wearing masks at all times • Adults should maintain social distancing to the maximum extent possible during the family time
Bringing Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you want to send snacks, please pre-package in individual portions to minimize handling and preparation. • Parents have been informed that snacks and drinks should be in individual containers so that sharing does not occur. Children should not bring back food or snacks after the visit. • Parents and children must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating. • Food and utensils should not be shared. • Plasticware and paper plates are recommended. Each child must have an individual cup to use.
Enhanced Cleaning and/or Disinfecting Procedures	<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"> • Everyone should wash and/or sanitize their hands before putting on a face mask/covering PPE and after they take it off. • Everyone should clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as car doors, steering wheels, doorknobs, phones, and pens. • 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.

	<p>When washing, feeding, or holding young children, adults can protect themselves by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wearing layers of clothing, which can be taken off after a visit• Wearing long hair up off the collar in a ponytail or other updo• Washing their hands, neck and other places touched by a child's secretions• Changing the child's clothes if secretions (e.g., drool) are on the child's clothes• Changing the adult's top if there are secretions on it and washing their hands again.• Placing contaminated items in a plastic bag or immediately washing them in a washing machine <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> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having them wash their hands when they first return• Changing the clothing they were wearing• Taking a shower or bath
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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/people-at-higher-risk.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>