

Strategies for Maintaining a Child's Connections During COVID-19: *What Caregivers, Professionals, and Providers Need to Know*



Rose Wentz, BSW, MPA

Jason Bragg and Katie Biron


Supported by: Washington OPD, Washington CITA and
Washington DCYF



Welcome

What we will cover

- Federal guidance, WA Supreme Court Order
- WA Governor and DCYF
- In-person Family time visits
- Children - recommendations by age
- Virtual Family time visits – how to
- Roles and Responsibilities
- What do you need?




Federal Children's Bureau: Guidance on Visitation

- "Family time is important for child and parent well-being, as well as efforts toward reunification."
- "Family time is especially important during times of crisis. CB strongly discourages blanket orders that are not specific to each child and family that suspend family time; doing so is contrary to the well-being and best interest of children, may contribute to additional child trauma and may impede the likelihood of reunification."



Children's Bureau

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families



Federal Children's Bureau: Guidance on Visitation

- ▶ Children kept in communication with their attorneys/CASA/GAL
- ▶ Ensure parents, children, and caregivers have access to technology
- ▶ Encourage Resource/caregiving families to support visits
- ▶ 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.




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WA Supreme Court April 3rd

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- Virtual visits are not sufficient in some cases. DCYF must notify families if in-person visits are being modified
 - Court can hold hearings on requests for in-person visits
 - Courts can consider whether a disruption in services to parents means a plan can be extended
 - DCYF cannot file TPR during this time
 - Attorneys for parents and children must be given contact information and dependency petition prior to hearing
 - Courts can determine that any dependency hearing is emergent

Washington State Directive of the Governor 20-02



- Effective April 1, 2020
 - Provide for virtual visitation
 - Utilize available funding to acquire and expedite the distribution of equipment
 - Prepare and distribute guidance regarding the use of video technology
 - Ensure technology support is readily available as needed

Washington State Directive of the Governor 20-02

- ▶ Conduct meetings with visitation providers to assess implementation of video visitation
- ▶ To require foster parents to use available means for video visitation in order to support ongoing contact for children, parents and siblings



DCYF


- Family time Interim Policy
 - no in-person visits
- Be flexible – schedule, time, frequency
- Trying to get agreement to avoid hearings
- Refer families to Family Time Visit Provider to set up visits, provide technology



DCYF



- DCYF guidance on how to obtain equipment and internet access
- Virtual visits for relatives are allowed
- Continue to make new referrals for visits
- DCYF Staff guidance technology - https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0052.pdf
- DCYF Provider guidance technology - https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0051.pdf



Why family time is even more important now


- Maintaining all family relationships is critical to the child's well-being, safety and permanency
- Enhancing a child's connections builds resiliency
- Children and Youth
 - Bonding and attachment vs Grief and loss
 - Times of Stress
 - Reduce trauma
 - One month is a lifetime to a baby
- Important for the parents

Physical distancing NOT social and emotional distancing



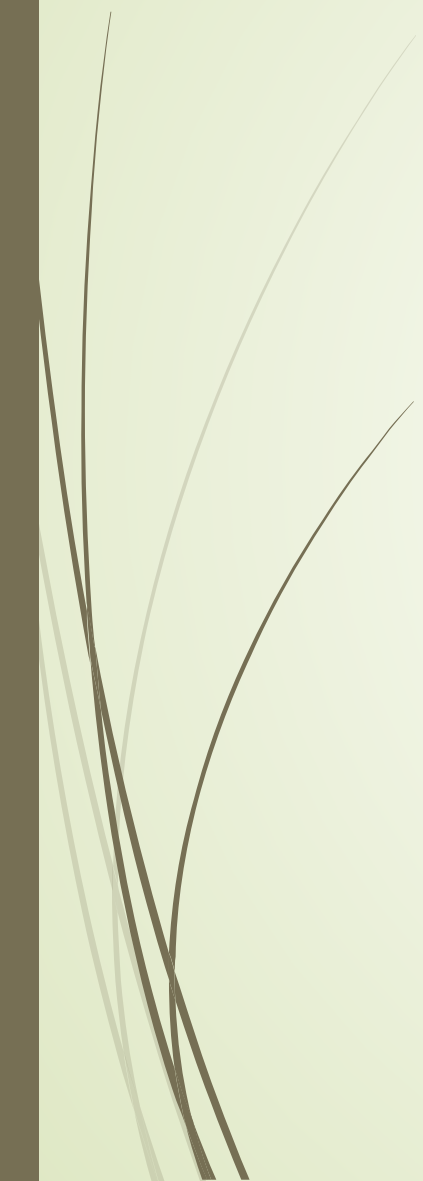
In-person Visits

1. Ask COVID19 questions of all the people who would be involved in the visit. (next slide)
2. If there are no signs of illness in-person visits should be considered for:
 - A. Children under the age of 3
 - B. Children who were in the process of returning home
 - C. When the visitation supervisor can support the visit
 - D. When visits can occur outside or places where the child can be kept a safe distance from third parties
 - E. A child/youth who is able to maintain a distance from others



COVID19 questions

In the assessment, ask:

- If anyone in the household is currently sick;
 - Has anyone in the household been in contact with anyone known to have COVID-19;
 - Does anyone in the household have underlying health conditions?
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Transfer of child 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, stuffed animal) wash after the visit.
- Place dirty clothes, blankets etc. in a plastic bag after use, wash after visit

Transfer of child recommendations



- Transfer child's items in disposal bag
- Wear long sleeve clothes, change clothes after visit
- Wash any area of your body that the child has touched
- Everyone wear a face mask when in public
 - Tissue for children under the age of two



Check for changing policies,
updates, public health
recommendations.

These are likely to change as
we learn more and relax the
stay at home order.

When In-Person visits are not possible

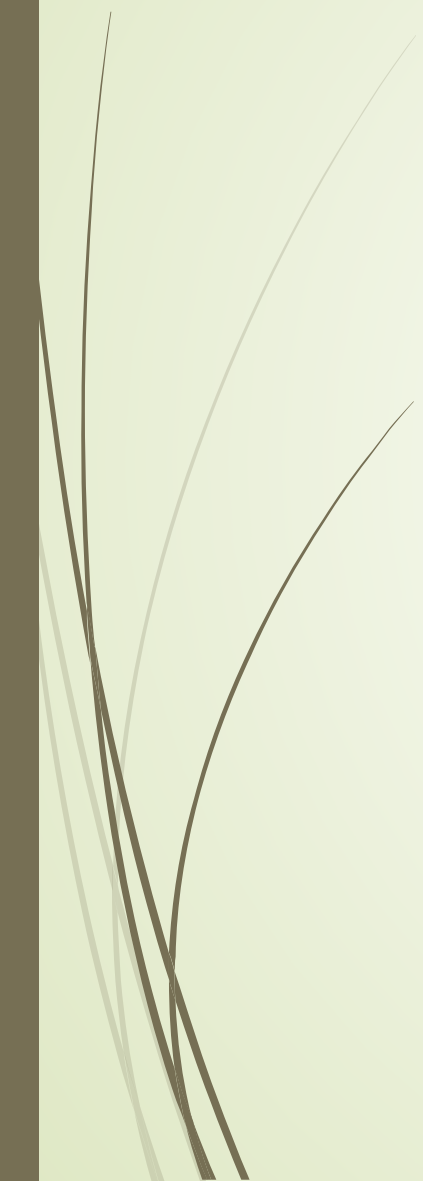


Some options are more powerful than others.

1. **Audio and visual** – Skype, Facetime, Zoom
2. **Audio only** – phone calls
3. **Text only** – live – SMS, chat apps and even email when done with immediate 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 Visits

- No transportation issues
 - Less conflicts in scheduling
 - No small visit rooms
 - Monitors, visit supervisors, coaches can continue services
 - Strengthen relationship between birth parents and foster parents/cargivers.
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Virtual Visitation Can Work

- Options are endless
- Phone, apps, internet, data plans
 - Many free apps and programs
 - DCYF website has resources listed
 - Internet companies offering free services
 - Help all parties learn how to use the technology
 - Schools, visit providers
- *Handout: Virtual Visit Recommendations and Resources*

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

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



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



Planning a Virtual Visit

- ▶ Plan with all the parties:
 - ▶ Birth parents, caregivers, older children
- ▶ Introductions
- ▶ Setting day, time, type of internet platform
- ▶ Setting expectations, boundaries
- ▶ Planning activities

- ▶ *Handout: Long Distance Activities for Parents*



Does a Virtual Visit need to be supervised?

- Supervision is not needed if the parent and child were having unsupervised visits
- Assess the Safety threats
 - Physical threats and inability to safely care for a child are unlikely to need supervised virtual visits.
 - Emotional or verbal threats may require supervision
- Most virtual visits will not require a written report
- Coaching on visits can occur
 - Plan on how this will occur

Roles & Responsibilities

► Parents

- More frequent but shorter virtual visits
- Opportunities to grow and learn during virtual visits
- Helping their child during this time


► Caregivers

- Visits support the child's well-being and minimize traumatic and behavioral reactions
- Requires their participation for virtual visits
- Less issues with travel, school disruption; routines, meals
- Confidentiality can be maintained



Professionals

- Stay in contact with clients/families
 - More frequent but shorter visits
 - Some in person visits will be needed/required
 - Attorneys/CASA/GAL have contact with client
- Creativity is key
 - Many free resources
 - Look for solutions the children and families are counting on us
- Take care of yourself and your colleagues



Not sure what is best
practice....
Ask your supervisor for
support and advice.



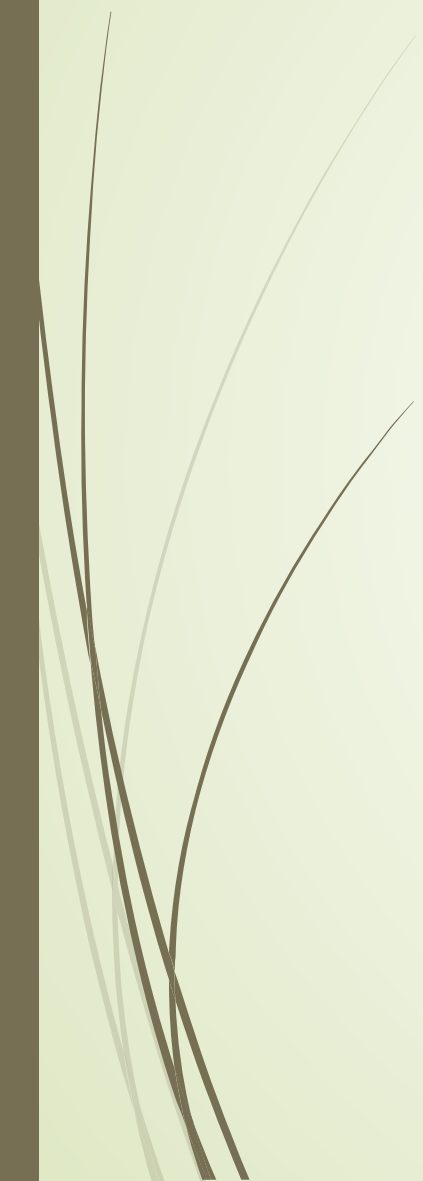
Extra Stressors on Child Welfare Staff*

- Difficulty in investigating Child Abuse and Neglect
- Difficulty to keep up with children in out of home care
- Difficulty keeping children in touch with families
- Heightened risk of personal infection, sickness and death
- Knowing that abuse or neglect, Intimate Partner Violence, drug addiction, & mental health crisis will increase
- Being overworked and fatigued
- Risk of inability to keep children and families safe in spite of great effort

** Quality Improvements Center for Workforce Development and Children's Bureau*



4 Elements of Self-Care

- **PHYSICAL:** Keep your body active. Get plenty of rest and good nutrition.
 - **PSYCHOLOGICAL:** Maintain a routine. Spend time outside. Actively process and manage your emotions. Journal. Practice gratitude.
 - **COGNITIVE:** Keep your brain active with things other than work. Read for pleasure, complete puzzles or other brain exercises. Set limits on the amount of news and information you absorb. Do something creative.
 - **SOCIAL:** Maintain your connections in creative and consistent ways.
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Factors that Facilitate Professional Functioning

- ▶ Sense of belonging and connection (Relational Supervision)
- ▶ Recognition and acknowledgement among co-workers of shared challenges/experiences.
- ▶ Directors and supervisors who offer consistent emotional support and help staff manage their conflicting obligations.
- ▶ Encourage staff to journal to process all the trauma they are exposed to.



What Do You Need?

Please complete these two polls on what you need.



Resources

Policies, handouts, videos, and the links to recordings of webinars can be found at:

- ▶ CITA <https://www.wacita.org/resources-for-family-time-in-the-covid-19-era/>
- ▶ DCYF Internal – <http://intranet.dcyf.wa.gov:8090/drupal-8.4.0/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-updates>
- ▶ DCYF External - <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/coronavirus-covid-19/child-welfare>

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

**Plan for the
future**

CLE or CJE credits

If you would like CLE or CJE Credits for attending this webinar:

- **By May 20, 2020**, send an email to Susan Peterson at susan.peterson@courts.wa.gov with the following information:
 - Name & Date of the Webinar (**Strategies for Maintaining a Child's Connections During COVID-19: What Caregivers, Professionals, and Providers Need to Know, April 28**)
 - Your name
 - Your WSBA#
 - Your court name (for judicial officers)
- **After May 20**, record your attendance on the WSBA website for MCLE Activity #1138459