

 <p>Children's Services Agency</p> <p>Communication Issuance</p> <p>20-032</p>	Subject/Title	COVID-19 Response: Interim Caseworker Guidance for Face to Face Contacts and Parenting Time-Sibling Visits for Children's Services Agency and Contracted Child Placing Agencies
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Distribution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CSA Central Office Managers/Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDHHS BSC and County Directors <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDHHS Juvenile Justice Managers/Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MDHHS Child Welfare Managers/Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Native American Tribes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office of Workforce Development and Training <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Agency Child Welfare Managers/Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residential Abuse/Neglect Managers/Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residential Juvenile Justice Managers/Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

The following provides guidance for Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and contracted child placing agency Children's Protective Services (CPS), foster care, and juvenile justice caseworkers regarding conducting face to face contacts, parenting time, and sibling visits for children and families in response to current COVID-19 health concerns.

In cases where face to face visits must occur and someone in the home has been exposed to COVID-19 or is currently sick, caseworkers should contact their supervisor for guidance on how to proceed to mitigate risk of staff exposure.

Please note that in some cases noted below, allowable alternatives to face to face are permitted. Allowable alternatives include phone calls, Skype, Facetime, or other technology that allows verification of child safety and ability to address identified concerns. Allowable alternatives should be documented within the social work contact section of MiSACWIS with the rationale "COVID-19."

CPS Investigations

Priority 1 Complaints - assigned by Intake as P1.

- Alleged Child Victims – Face to face contact must occur.
- Parent or Other Adult Primary Caregiver – Face to face contact must occur.
- Alleged Perpetrator – Face to face contact must occur.
- Non-victim Child – Allowable alternatives permitted for contact required by policy.
- Others – Allowable alternatives permitted for contact required by policy.
- Home Visits – In-person home visits must only occur if observation of the home is critical to investigation of the complaint.

- Collateral Contacts – Non face to face collateral contact must occur to the extent possible to accurately assess child safety concerns.

Priority 2 Complaints – assigned by Intake as P2.

- Alleged Child Victims – Face to face contact must occur.
- Parent or Other Adult Primary Caregiver – Allowable alternatives permitted for contact required by policy.
- Alleged Perpetrator – Allowable alternatives permitted for contact required by policy.
- Non-victim Children – Allowable alternatives permitted for contact required by policy.
- Others – Allowable alternatives permitted for contact required by policy.
- Home Visits – In-person home visits must only occur if observation of the home is critical to investigation of the complaint.
- Collateral Contacts – Non face to face collateral contact must occur to the extent possible in order to accurately assess child safety concerns.

***Exception:** If CPS cannot make face to face contact with an alleged child victim and child safety is an immediate concern or the child is under 6 years old, consult your supervisor for further direction. Depending on circumstances, an allowable alternative contact may be appropriate, additional collateral contacts may be considered, or assistance from law enforcement may be needed.

***SAFETY PLANS:** Given potential interruption in services caused by the COVID-19 health emergency, it is especially critical that safety plans be developed and regularly reviewed and updated with all applicable case members.

CPS Ongoing

Effective immediately until at least 4/6/20, in-person contacts with child victims for CPS ongoing cases have been reduced to the following:

- **Intensive** – 2 contacts per month are required in person; remaining 2 contacts must still occur but caseworker may use allowable alternative.
- **High** – 2 contacts per month are required in person; remaining 1 contact must still occur but caseworker may use allowable alternative.
- **Moderate** – 1 contact per month is required in person; remaining 1 contact must still occur but caseworker may use allowable alternative.
- **Low** – 1 contact per month is still required in person.

*Consistent with current policy, service provider contacts may take the place of CPS contacts; however, the CPS worker must have 1 in person contact/month with each child victim.

***Exception:** More frequent in-person contact with the child must occur if it is necessary to determine or respond to a child safety concern. Coordination with law enforcement should occur if needed.

Foster Care/Juvenile Justice

Worker Contacts

Effective immediately until at least 4/6/20, in-person worker contacts are not required to occur, unless necessary to determine or respond to child safety or an unmet health need of a child. Required contacts must still occur using an allowable alternative.

Independent Living Plus Contractors

Private agencies with a contract to provide Independent Living Plus services must continue to ensure the well-being of youth on their caseload and training of independent living skills of youth served under their contract. However, these requirements do not need to be met in-person or in the community. Allowable alternatives, such as Skype, Facetime, or other technology is permitted to meet contract requirements.

Parenting Time and Sibling Visits

Effective immediately until at least 4/6/20, parenting time and sibling visits are not required to occur in person. Efforts must be made to maintain parent child contact requirements by using an allowable alternative, such as phone, Skype, Facetime or other available technology. Caseworkers should not prohibit approved parenting time or sibling visits. However, the frequency, duration, and type of contact may be tailored to the case circumstances, government and local public health directives, and in consultation with and agreement among parents and caregivers. Staff should work with their local office and involved individuals to make every effort to utilize technology that allows for as much engagement as possible if in-person visits cannot occur.

If staff, caregivers, and parents are agreeable to having in- person parenting time and sibling visits, this contact may still occur provided everyone in the foster parent and birth parents home are pre-screened and answer “no” to the following questions:

1. Is there any reason you have been instructed to self-quarantine or isolate? If yes, why?
2. Have you had contact with any Persons Under Investigation (PUIs) for COVID-19 within the last 14 days, OR with anyone with confirmed COVID-19?
3. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath)?

If an in-person visit can occur, conducting the visit outdoors should be explored as an alternative to an indoor visit.

Caseworkers should contact their court to make them aware of any changes to court ordered parenting time due to public health and safety issues.

Staff Guidance for Before, During and After In-Person Visits

- Ensure screening questions above are asked of all involved participants and inquired of for all household members of participants.

- Limit exposure to unsanitized surfaces and large groups of people when determining location.
- Avoid handshakes.
- Ensure all individuals involved in the visit have thoroughly washed their hands prior to starting the visit and following the visit.
- Advise individuals involved to avoid touching their face.
- Advise individuals involved to cover their mouth with a tissue when sneezing/coughing or do so into their elbow.
- If the visit is occurring in a local office, ensure visiting space is thoroughly cleaned/sanitized prior to use by next family.
- For visits occurring in local offices, ensure all community toys/table activities are cleared from the room. Parents, caregivers, foster parents should be invited to bring their own freshly sanitized toys/activities for use during the visit and take with them following the visit.

Parenting Time for Children in Child Caring Institutions (CCIs)

In-person parenting time may continue for children in CCIs so long as it is safe to do so. CCIs are required to assess for COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors for all individuals who are not under their care and seeking entry into their facilities. The facilities must deny entry to any individual with symptoms or risk factors. Facilities should implement alternative electronic communication to facilitate family visits when in person visits cannot occur. Please see [Executive Order 2020-7](#) for additional details regarding entry into facilities.

Resources

Staff should regularly check <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> for updated information from CDC and <http://michigan.gov/coronavirus> for updates from MDHHS.

Questions

If a private agency has questions regarding the face to face contact or the visitation plan for a particular case, they may contact their local MDHHS office for guidance. If a local MDHHS office has questions, they may contact their Business Service Center (BSC).

**Please note that all COVID-19 related communications will be revisited, at minimum, every two weeks, unless additional interim guidance is needed.*