

**Pennsylvania Family Support Programs Operational Guidance**  
**Aligned with the Governor's Phased-In Approach to Reopen Pennsylvania**  
**Original June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020 | Revised July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) recognizes that maintaining the safety of the Family Support workforce and families is essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. OCDEL is utilizing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, as well as guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), to help Family Support programs begin planning to safely re-establish face-to-face Family Support services in their communities. Links to guidance from the CDC and DOH are included within this guidance.

OCDEL is providing this guidance to help individuals who provide Family Support services and the families that receive services to be safe during the COVID-19 public health emergency as counties move from the red through the yellow to the green phases.

**Pennsylvania's Plan for Reopening**

The administration has relied on DOH's metrics and a data tool developed by Carnegie Mellon University to decide when to move a county to a new phase. The full plan is available [here](#).

**Family Support programs should review and plan for the implementation of the [CDC](#) and [DOH](#) guidelines before reopening.**

**Red Phase**  
**Family Support Program Guidance**

- Face-to-face Family Support services are suspended and the use of virtual home visits/tele-intervention is encouraged.
  - This includes both home visiting and group-based Family Support services.
  - Groups may be offered through virtual platforms if it is an approved model service delivery strategy.
- Screenings conducted only virtually.

**Yellow Phase**  
**Family Support Program Guidance**

- Virtual home visits/tele-intervention to deliver Family Support services and screenings continue.
  - In person group-based Family Support services remain suspended.
    - Groups may still be offered through virtual platforms if it is an approved model service delivery strategy.
- Family Support programs housed within or utilizing school buildings for services must also follow the Pennsylvania Department of Education [guidance](#) for reopening school buildings.
- Family Support programs may identify a need to schedule an in-person screening if the screening cannot be completed remotely. Providers may also need to provide services in a home if the family does not have access to technology that allows services to be delivered through virtual home visits/tele-intervention. In these cases, prior to making a home visit, providers of Family Support services should identify their own risk of transmitting COVID-19 and their [risk](#) of complications if they were to be infected. Providers of Family Support services should also identify family members in the visited home who may be at [risk](#) of transmitting COVID-19 or having complications if infected with COVID-19.
- When there is an identified need for a home visit, providers of Family Support services should contact the family prior to the home visit to ask the following health screening questions. Providers should document the responses in the provided template or in a home visit note.
  1. Has anyone in the home tested positive for or is suspected of having COVID-19 in the last 14 days?

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2. Does anyone in the home have signs or symptoms of a fever, new or worsening cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea, vomiting, or respiratory illness?
3. Has anyone in the home had contact within the last 14 days with someone with or awaiting test results for COVID-19?
4. Has anyone who will be present during the visit or group session\* (\*for green phase only) traveled outside of Pennsylvania in the past 14 days?
5. Will a person with a weakened immune system, a person who is over the age of 65 years, or a person that has chronic health conditions (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, diabetes), or other factors that pose a risk if the person becomes infected with COVID-19 be present during the visit or group session\* (\*for green phase only)?

**If providers of Family Support services believe they are at risk of transmitting COVID-19 or the response is yes to any of the first three questions above**, it is recommended that providers of Family Support services communicate with the family the need to postpone the visit and to schedule a time to plan for a future visit. If the answer is yes to the last two questions, it is recommended that the provider of Family Support services and the family discuss the possible risk in delivering an in-person session and document the decision.

**If the provider of Family Support services is not able to contact the family before the home visit** and decides to proceed with the visit, the provider should ask the five health screening questions included above before entering the home to make sure the provider is doing everything the provider can to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The provider should stand approximately 6 feet from the doorway when asking the health screening questions.

- If the answer is no to all of the health screening questions included above, and the provider decides that going to the home is in the best interest of the child and family, then the provider of Family Support services should take the precautions listed below to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- If the answer is yes to any of the first three questions above the provider should reschedule the in-person home visit for another date and time or reschedule the visit as a virtual home visit. If the answer is yes to the last two questions, it is recommended that the provider of Family Support services and the family discuss the possible risk in delivering in-person services and document the decision.

**Precautions during a home visit include:**

- Following the [CDC](#) and [DOH](#) guidelines.
- Whenever possible, maintaining a minimum 6-foot distance between the provider of Family Support services and family members during a visit.
- Conducting the visit outside of the home if appropriate and within model-fidelity requirements.
- Wearing a [mask](#) as defined in the FAQ's of the [DOH Universal Face Covering Order](#) issued on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Minimizing physical contact with frequently touched surfaces in the home.
- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before entering/going to the home and after exiting. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth.

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**Green Phase**  
**Family Support Program Guidance**

- Virtual home visits/tele-intervention to deliver Family Support services and conduct screenings should continue unless there is minimal concern for the spread of COVID-19 in the Family Support programs service area.
- Family Support programs housed within or utilizing school buildings for services must also continue to follow the Pennsylvania Department of Education [guidance](#) for reopening school buildings.
- Face-to-face services may resume.
  - Including all in-person group-based Family Support services.
  - Before beginning group services all Family Support Programs must have a health and safety plan.
- The provider of Family Support Services, including all in-person group-based sessions should continue to contact all families prior to a service to ask the health screening questions as described in the “Yellow Phase”.
- All Family Support programs must follow [CDC](#) and [DOH](#) guidelines.

**Resources**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a rapidly evolving situation. It is important for Family Support programs to continually check the resources listed below for any new guidance or additional information.

- Get the latest information from DOH [here](#).
- CDC guidance for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel is available [here](#).
- CDC guidance on infection prevention and control recommendations for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 in healthcare settings is available [here](#).

**Pennsylvania Department of Education**

- [COVID-19 Guidance and Answers to Common Questions](#)
- [Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools](#)

**Pennsylvania Department of Health**

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Help Stop the Spread](#)

**CDC Resources**

**Communities and Healthcare Providers**

- [Communities, Schools, Workplaces, and Events Information for Where You Live, Work, Learn, and Play](#)
- [Communications Resources](#)
- [Information for Healthcare Professionals about Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

**Pregnant Women, Infants and Families**

- [If You Are Pregnant, Breastfeeding, or Caring for Young Children](#)

**General Prevention and Frequently Asked Questions**

- [When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)

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- [Household Checklist](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

**Families and Young Children**

- [Keep Children Healthy during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection for Households](#)
- [Coping with Stress](#)
- [Taking Care of your Behavioral Health \(SAMHSA\)](#)

**Social Service Providers**

- [Child Care, Schools, and Youth Programs](#)