



April 1, 2020

## Guidance for Remote Home Visiting Program Implementation in Oregon During COVID-19 Emergency

### Purpose

To support maternal and child health home visiting programs and staff to sustain evidence-based home visiting services during the COVID-19 response.

### Background

Decisions on specific delivery method of home visits during the COVID-19 health emergency are best made at the local level by home visiting programs in consultation with their Local Public Health Authority (LPHA) and consistent with model developer guidance. With the addition of more stringent social distancing measures in the Governor's [Executive Order 20-12](#), this guidance document provides guidance for remote methods for home visiting services continuity.

### Possible Modes for Remote Visits

Two primary modes for remote visits include video conferencing and telephone calls. Check with your client on the phone and find out what phone or video platforms they may already use or be familiar with. Ask what method they would prefer or would work best for them.

1. Video conference: Live, two-way interactive video and audio transmission conferencing resulting in real time communication between the home visitor and the client
2. Telephone calls: Telephonic communication between the home visitor and the client

Such communications may be conducted regardless of the location of the client and/or provider (e.g., clinic site or home).

### Recommendations for Conducting Remote Visits

#### ***Role of the Home Visitor***

The role is the same, whether they are implementing the visit in person or through a virtual platform. However, home visitors may need to draw on different skill sets or focus more heavily on different skills in a virtual visit.

## ***Orienting Families to Remote Home Visiting***

Remote delivery of personal visits will be new to both the home visitors and the families that they are serving. It is important to prepare the family (e.g., via a phone call) for their first remote visit. It is also important to have a conversation at the beginning of the first remote visit to discuss the transition to remote service delivery—how the visits will remain the same, and what might be different. After the first remote visit, and continuing throughout remote service delivery, be sure to reflect with families on what is working and what is challenging, just as would happen during in-person visits. Reflective supervision may be a time to address challenges and successes.

## ***Privacy and Security***

When conducting a remote home visit with a client:

- Verify client identity at start of the remote visit by confirming name and date of birth.
- Ensure the remote visit occurs in a private area where no other person can hear the conversation with the client. If using video conferencing on an approved local implementing agency platform, ensure any material with identifying information is out of view of the client.

## ***Internet/Data Access***

Knowing that some families may have limited data packages with their mobile carriers, programs may need to assist families in accessing expanded services. The Federal Communication Commission's Keep America Connected Pledge has more than 60 companies signed on to help low-income people avoid service disruptions during the COVID-19 emergency. <https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>. This [article](#) provides some details on individual companies' offers.

## **Additional Considerations for Video Home Visits**

To the extent possible, obtain and maintain technology used in video communication that is compliant with privacy and security standards and approved by your organization; however, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued [notification of enforcement discretion for telehealth remote communications](#) during the COVID-19 emergency:

*“Under this Notice, covered health care providers may use popular applications that allow for video chats, including Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger video chat, Google Hangouts video, or Skype, to provide telehealth without risk that OCR might seek to impose a penalty for noncompliance with the HIPAA Rules related to the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. Providers are encouraged to notify patients that these third-party applications potentially introduce privacy risks, and providers should enable all available encryption and privacy modes when using such applications....”*

*Under this Notice, however, Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok, and similar video communication applications are public facing, and should not be used in the provision of telehealth by covered health care providers.”*

## ***Devices***

Video visits will require that home visitors and families have access to a device that can support the video conferencing platform selected.

## ***Technical Support to Families***

Programs may find that they will need to provide occasional technical support to families. It can be helpful to identify a staff person who can fill this role.

## ***Lighting***

When conducting the video visit, pay attention to windows or other bright lights that might influence the ability of the home visitor and the family to clearly see each other's faces during the visit.

## ***Noise Level***

Microphones on computers and tablets pick up various levels of background sound. For optimal engagement, reduce distractions such as pets, notifications from phones, other programs on the computer, or televisions.

- **Tip:** It can be beneficial to the home visitor to have similar items available in their environment as the family has in theirs, such as books, blocks, or toys that might be referenced during the visit. These will support home visitor as they coach the family through portions of the visit, such as parent-child interaction.

## ***Video Background***

Choose a background that is not overly distracting, and that is sensitive to the family.

- **Tip.** It can be helpful for home visitors to test their virtual visit environment prior to their first visit to determine what changes might need to be made before meeting with the family.

## ***Example Video Home Visit***

This short video that shows a demonstration of a Parents as Teachers virtual home visit. It models how a home visitor might interact with a parent and child during a visit (the visit example begins at minute 2:30).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze3eWd0CoFs&t=193s>

## ***Video Platforms***

HIPAA-compliant video applications are preferred whenever possible. Some options are listed below, but as this a quickly changing situation, the details of these services may change as well. Please be sure to contact the vendors directly.

- **Doxy:** <https://doxy.me/>  
Free for a basic account. No software download required and compatible with both Android and iOS platforms. Access to secure file sharing with professional membership of \$35 a month.

- **Zoom for Healthcare:** <https://zoom.us/healthcare>  
\$200 per month (billed monthly) for minimum 10 providers. \$20 for each for additional provider.
- **Thera-LINK:** <https://www.thera-link.com/>  
\$250 per month for up to 50 sessions per month, unlimited providers
- **Google G Suite Hangouts Meet:** [https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en\\_us/products/meet/](https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en_us/products/meet/)  
\$6 per user per month for entire G Suite basic package.

### ***File Sharing***

For programs that need the capacity to upload data collection forms to a secure, shared space so that data entry staff can enter data in data systems, there are a variety of options:

- **Encrypted email:** Email alone is not HIPAA compliant, but with encryption this can be a secure method. Ask your IT professional for details.
- **Dropbox for Business:** <https://www.dropbox.com/business>  
\$15 per user per month billed monthly for a minimum of 3 users.  
30-day free trial available.
- **Egnyte Connect:** <https://www.egnyte.com/>  
\$15 per user per month for a minimum of 5 users. 15-day free trial.
- **Google Drive:** <https://gsuite.google.com>  
\$6 per user per month for entire G Suite basic package.