

**Date:** Sunday, March 15, 2020

**Subject:** UPDATE: Clarification for our Chicago Early Learning Community - Home Visiting

Dear DFSS Home Visiting Program Partners,

Friday afternoon, Governor Pritzker announced a two-week, temporary suspension of public schools statewide. For Chicago Early Learning, this suspension applies only to programs that are operating in a CPS school setting. We recognize that you, our home visiting program partners, have questions that are unique to your specific models.

We are writing to confirm that DFSS is suspending in-person visits until further notice in alignment with decisions made statewide by MIECHV and DHS Healthy Family Programs. This decision is specific to our **PI Home Visiting, EHS/HS Home Based Services.**

In an email dated Friday, March 13, 2020, the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childcare Development stated that "During center closures, employees should continue to engage families and to deliver services to the extent possible, remotely". **Your staff should offer visits over the phone or FaceTime/Skype if the family has that capability and follow the programmatic model's recommendations related to conducting and documenting visits that take place virtually or on the phone.**

1. Home Visiting / Home Based staff must have access to offices.
2. Agencies must ensure staff have access to computers and phones.
3. Prepare take-home packets of developmentally appropriate home activities that can go to families arriving and leaving program sites.
4. Home Visiting / Home Based staff will continue to use curriculum, Parent's as Teachers, Baby Talk, or Healthy families in developing these visits and as guides to offer parents activities and ideas for their children while at home.
5. Phone/Face Time /Skype visits must follow the current interval required by the model being implemented:
  1. PI – Provide visits once every two weeks per family; duration of each visit will be roughly an hour
  2. EHS / HS – Provide one visit per week – 1.5 hours

Continue to follow [CDC](#) and [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) recommendations. You can also visit the [Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development](#) webpage for resources and links to information to help keep all Illinois residents informed, especially families and those who provide services to young children.

In addition to the specific information listed above about home visiting programs and services, we want to remind everyone to remind their families and staff of the simple measures that each individual should take to limit the spread of COVID-19.

- Stay home if you are not feeling well and keep sick kids at home
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; use at least 60% alcohol based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw the tissue away
- Practice social distancing where appropriate, including alternatives to shaking hands, like an elbow bump or hand wave
- Avoid large group gatherings, especially if you are over 60 years old and have serious underlying health conditions

It also is important to note that those most vulnerable to the virus remain individuals over 60 and adults with underlying conditions. Please make accommodations for your staff as needed, with this information in mind.

Please check your inbox for a call with our Chicago Department of Public Health colleagues scheduled for Tuesday.

Thank you for your leadership during this time. We are in uncharted territory, but we will work together and support each other in order to do our very best for the organizations, families and children who make up our community. Do not hesitate to contact us with site-level concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Cerathel Burgess-Burnett