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<th>Office and Division: Office of Children, Youth and Families Division of Child Welfare</th>
<th>Number: PM-CW-2020-0002</th>
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<tr>
<td>Program Area: Child welfare</td>
<td>Issue Date: April 8, 2020</td>
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<td>Title: Video-conferencing in lieu of face-to-face monthly contacts for parents and caregivers in light of COVID-19</td>
<td>Office Director: Minna Castillo Cohen, M. Ed</td>
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<td>Memo Type: Policy</td>
<td>Division Director: Joe Homlar</td>
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<td>Pertinent State/Federal Statute and/or State/Federal Rule: CCR-25-09-03, 7.202.1(F)</td>
<td>Expiry Date: April 8, 2023</td>
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<td>Outcome: Provide an update on policies to allow video-conferencing in lieu of face-to-face monthly contacts with parents and caregivers in light of the current public health crisis and declared State of Emergency</td>
<td>Effective Date: April 8, 2020</td>
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<td>Key Words: Contacts, Face-to-Face, Video Conferencing, COVID19, parents, caregivers and long term intended caregivers</td>
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Intended Recipients: This communication has been sent to all county human/social service directors and subscribers to the Office of Children, Youth and Families community partners email list who elect to receive notification when the Office issues a memo. Please forward pertinent information on to staff members as you deem appropriate. Please forward pertinent information on to staff members as you deem necessary.

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum from the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) is to provide an update on policies to allow video-conferencing in lieu of face-to-face monthly contacts between caseworkers and parents and caregivers in open child welfare cases in light of the current public health crisis, COVID-19. The Division of Child Welfare (DCW) continues to explore guidance for county practice in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, so please be aware that updates may be frequent and forthcoming. County departments of human/social services should continue to work with local public health and other local agencies to develop protocols and processes to ensure the safety of children/youth while maintaining a balance with the safety of workers.

Action: **Face-to-face contacts with parents/caregivers during the pandemic**

County departments of human/social services are required in Section 7.202.1.F to conduct at least monthly face-to-face contacts with parents to assess the parent(s) ability to provide safety for the child or youth and make progress toward family service plan goals.

While the expectation of in-person, monthly face-to-face caseworker and caregiver visits to ensure the safety of children/youth remains a foundational component of child welfare, counties may determine local protocols regarding video-conferencing in lieu of required monthly in-person visits of parents and caregivers in open child welfare cases during this public health crisis under limited circumstances. The reason for using video-conferencing should be directly related to the health of the child(ren)/youth, parents, caregivers, or others who would be in contact and could put the families, children, youth, work force or providers in compromised health situations. This should be clearly documented in Trails. The contact should be determined with the parent(s) and caregiver(s) to determine what best fits their needs and the needs of the child(ren). When possible and appropriate, county workers should call the parent(s), caregiver(s) and others by phone first and ask if they would like to have contact by video-conferencing versus face-to-face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. County departments should also consider how they should notify courts, attorneys, and others involved in the court process as it relates to visitation of any changes to caregiver contact as it relates to this guidance.

The purpose of this new guidance is to assist with the growing health crisis. The individual circumstances of each case are always critical to consider when establishing county protocols. The DCW intermediary assigned to the county is also available for consultation.

This may likely raise many questions for counties and families. Currently, Colorado guidance and Centers for Disease Control guidance is rapidly evolving to limit contact as much as possible to slow and reduce infections of
COVID-19. As counties decide how and when to leverage the option for video conference in lieu of in-person visits of parents and caregivers in open child welfare cases, DCW would offer the following factors for consideration. This is not a decision tree, and these questions are presented in no particular order; rather, these are factors for consideration on a case by case basis in partnership with your local health authorities.

The following are questions and considerations to be utilized in creating county protocols and processes. This is not an all-inclusive list. Please consult your county policies and local public health department for policies related to COVID-19 and coronavirus exposure.

- Is there a current, identified concern with the parent that can only be addressed by an in-person visit?
- Does the concern necessitate going into the home, or can the concern be addressed by an in-person meeting outdoors?
- Does the parent or caregiver have access to the internet and a device that allows for video conferencing? If not can the county arrange for these resources to be provided for the individual?
- Is the caseworker or anyone in the household experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, had known exposure to COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or in a known high risk category for severe illness from COVID-19 as defined by the CDC (currently 65 years or older; or anyone with a chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, anyone who is immunocompromised, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, or liver disease)?
- If an in person visit is necessary and an outside visit does not feel safe due to health concerns, could the visit be done through a window using phone for audio?

Trails and documentation:
Caseworkers should include specific documentation in the case file that reflects how the decision was made to use video-conferencing as an alternative to monthly face-to-face contacts with parents or caregivers involved in open child welfare cases because of the novel coronavirus outbreak. The record of contact should still include the assessment of safety, permanency and well-being of the child(ren)/youth in the case and the treatment plan progress of the parent or caregiver. If the caseworker conducts visits with the clients, parents, caregivers or collaterals through video-conferencing, the “video conferencing” selection should be selected in Trails.

Contact for questions regarding this Policy Memorandum: Korey.elger@state.co.us

Supersedes: Not Applicable

Memo Website: https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/current-cdhs-memos