

Caseworker's Role in Preparing Children and Youth for In-Person Visits

It is important to “normalize” a child’s experience in the activities a caseworker will be asking of them as they prepare for in-person family visitation. A caseworker should explain that the changes are precautions being asked for everyone given COVID-19 and public health concerns. Ideally, a caseworker will have a discussion with children regarding “how visitation use to be” and what will now happen before, during, and after visitation going forward. It is important to stress that the new processes have been put in place to keep them safe, and to keep their family safe from becoming ill. The following are topic areas to discuss with children, as age and cognitively appropriate:

- COVID-19: What it is, and why their contact with family was limited to video and phone contact, and why in-person visitation will now resume;
- The youth’ feelings around safety related to COVID-19, and measures they can take to feel safe while visiting their family members;
- The importance of the use of face coverings and that they will be used by all who will be at visits to ensure their safety;
- That the face coverings help them not touch their face (nose and mouth), with explanation that this is one way they can get sick;
- That they should leave their face coverings on the entire time they have a visit;
- That they will be asked to wash or sanitize their hands before, during and after visits, and that this is being done to keep them and their families safe;
- That they may choose to bring favorite toys to a visit, and that the toys will be washed before and after the visit too; and
- That their foster parents may ask them to change their clothes after a visit so that they can be washed to ensure their safety.

Specific attention should be given to telling child that the caseworker is also informing the child’s family of the same information so that all will remain well for future visits.