

March 19, 2020

**ND Dept of Human Svc – Child & Family Services Division**  
**Guidance on conducting CPS Assessments**

**Are we required to have face-to-face contact during a CPS assessment?**

ND Child Protective Services will continue to require face-to-face contact when assessing child safety. Staff conducting assessments should follow safety precautions as recommended by public health officials:

1. Ask the following questions at Intake:
  - a. Does the parent, child/youth or any member of the family living in the home have a lower respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath) or fever?
  - b. Has the parent, child/youth or any member of the family living in the home come into close contact with a person diagnosed or under investigation for COVID-19? Close contact means being within approximately 6 feet for a prolonged period; or having direct contact with infectious secretions – e.g. being coughed on – while not wearing a gown, gloves or eye protection.
  - c. Within the last 30 days, has the parent, child/youth or any member of the family living in the home recently traveled in an area with known local spread of COVID-19?
2. Call in advance of any home visit where an urgent or emergency response is not needed and screen with the questions above.
3. In emergency situations (where it is reported that a child(ren) may be in present or be impending danger (i.e., sexual abuse with perpetrator access, physical abuse with injuries, domestic violence, etc.), the staff person will request that law enforcement accompany them, or staff will enter the home using protective gear issued by local law enforcement agencies (face masks, coveralls, etc.).
4. In non-emergent situations, go to the home for the minimum time possible. Do not enter the home unless it is necessary. Children can be observed at the door or in a porch area, and may even be interviewed outdoors, weather permitting. Use physical distancing and other precautions such as hand washing, not touching your face, etc. Offer interviews in other surroundings (in office, parent's workplace or other public space) if practical. Rely on community partners, conduct interviews by phone with parents and older children when possible. Try to assure that the child is in a private space as much as possible when interviewing by phone.

**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

600 E Boulevard Ave Dept 325 | Bismarck ND 58505-0250

701.328.3541 | Fax 701.328.3538 | 800.755.2604 | 711 (TTY) | [www.nd.gov/dhs](http://www.nd.gov/dhs)

When responding to families in this time of high stress, we should also make extra effort to inquire about whether the family has any emergency needs for things like baby formula and food.

Connect with community partners such as law enforcement, public health, food pantries and other local agencies to help support stressed and isolated parents. Offer information from Parents Lead (<http://www.parentslead.org/> ) and the Parent Education Network (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pen> ) to assist parents in talking to their children about COVID-19 and providing parent support during this trying time.