

April 07, 2020

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

This letter provides guidance to counties and their contractors participating in the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program (HVP) who are being impacted by the statewide outbreak of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19 or Novel Coronavirus).



KIM JOHNSON
DIRECTOR

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GAVIN NEWSOM
GOVERNOR

April 07, 2020

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO
KIDS (CALWORKS) HOME VISITING PROGRAM (HVP) AND
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 19 (COVID-19)

The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance on policy interpretations and flexibilities available to County Welfare Departments (CWDs), as well as expectations for serving communities affected by the outbreak of COVID-19, or novel coronavirus. On March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom proclaimed a [State of Emergency](#) in California in response to the global COVID-19 outbreak and the increase in the number of positive cases across the state. The Department will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

IMPORTANCE OF HOME VISITING CONTINUITY

During these uncertain times, continuity and consistency of services for vulnerable populations is a necessity. Continued support of families through alternatives to in-person home visits will help home visitors continue to support families with resources and connect them with services for which they may be eligible. Home visitors can maintain contact with their clients through video calls, texting, and messaging applications.

DEPARTMENT GUIDANCE FOR HOME VISITING

To provide counties and their contractors with flexibility, the Department is temporarily allowing home visitors to provide services remotely if possible. When possible, this can be accomplished through a telehealth platform that is compliant with the [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act \(HIPAA\)](#). To the extent allowable under each model's guidelines, other communications platforms may also be used. In order to maintain fidelity to the models, counties and their home visiting contractors should follow the guidelines released by their model representatives.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES GUIDANCE, IN ALIGNMENT WITH DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Per the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the following outlines important guidance and key considerations for CalWORKs HVP programs with regards to: 1) one-on-one in-person activities, and 2) group sessions or classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1) One-on-one, in-person activities (e.g., in-person home visiting and case management services)

For guidance related to HVP services, please refer to the practice guidelines and standards set by your designated home visiting model. Specific model recommendations can be found here:

Healthy Families America (HFA): HFA allows virtual contact in very limited, special situations, such as when severe weather, a natural disaster or a community safety advisory impedes the ability to conduct a home visit with a family. A virtual home visit, via phone (Skype, FaceTime, doxy.me, or other video technology), can be counted when documented on a home visit record and the goals of a home visit are met including some of the focus areas, as described in these documents:

- [HFA Policies for Disease Outbreaks and Health Crisis](#)
- [Trainings and Travel Guidance](#)

Nurse Family Partnership (NFP): NFP requires that home visitors follow the guidance, policies, and procedures of their home visiting agency or local health authority including, but not limited to, infection control measures and physical/social distancing. The NFP National Service Office supports the use of telehealth rather than in-person home visits to keep families connected with NFP while managing community risks. Telehealth must replace in-person visits in cases where the client, anyone in the household, or the nurse shows signs of illness. Home visitors utilize appropriate adjusted visit scheduling (AVS) to increase capacity to maintain connection with clients if there is a reduction in nursing workforce due to assignment to COVID-19 activities or illness. **Note: The NFP resource links below require user log-ons.**

- [Telehealth 1](#)
- [Telehealth 2 – Visit Schedule](#)

Early Head Start: Early Heads Start programs are to take steps to prevent the introduction and spread of coronavirus among their staff, children, and families. Through collaboration and coordination with local health departments, programs can take steps to disseminate information about the disease and its potential transmission.

More information regarding Early Head Start and COVID-19 can be found through the following link: [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\) and COVID-19](#)

Parents as Teachers (PAT): The PAT National Center is considering virtual visits as approved home visits. PAT defines virtual personal visits as visits with families through an interactive video conferencing (IVC) platform that allows there to be two-way, real-time communication between the home visitor and parent(s), guardians, or primary caregivers and their child(ren). These visits are delivered using a device—preferably a computer (laptop) or tablet—and a secure video conferencing platform such as Zoom or Adobe Connect. Each virtual personal visit will contain the same components as an on-site visit; the method of delivery is the only difference. Per the PAT National Center, virtual personal visits are not telephone calls. Checking in with families by phone is encouraged, but it will not count as a PAT personal visit.

- A health brief and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document can be found by certified parent educators on the Model Implementation Work Space on OLIVER.
- For more information regarding PAT and COVID-19, please contact your model's national representative.

Local Home Visiting or Other Contracted Models: For all other home visiting programs, counties and their contractors should reach out to their national level model representatives for guidance regarding COVID-19. If a county's home visiting model does not have national level representation, counties and their contractors should follow local, state, and federal public health guidance regarding COVID-19.

Home visiting model guidance continues to change as more information is released regarding COVID-19. Home visiting organizations should regularly check their national-level home visiting model websites for updates.

2) Group Sessions and Classes

To protect public health and slow the rate of COVID-19 transmission, home visiting programs should follow CDPH guidance regarding gatherings, which is available here: [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#).

RESOURCES FOR HOME VISITING CLIENTS

If a county and their home visiting organization continue to provide home visits through a telehealth platform, home visitors should familiarize themselves with the additional resources and federal assistance being provided during this time. Current federal assistance includes a tax return extension for 2019, as well as economic assistance for individuals, families, and small businesses through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

Resources home visitors can inform their clients of include information on the CARES Act's economic assistance for individuals and families. The CARES Act provides tax free payments—treated as a refundable tax credit—to families with specified income levels. Individuals earning up to \$75,000 will receive \$1,200, plus an additional \$500 for each child. Efforts should be made to communicate this information to all HVP clients.

More information about the CARES Act can be found through the following link: [Senate Bill 3548](#).

RESOURCES FOR COUNTIES AND CONTRACTORS

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
[California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#)
[Coronavirus Screening Tool](#)
[State Issued Materials re: COVID-19](#)
[COVID-19 Guidance for Women and Families](#)
[National Home Visiting Resource Center \(NHVRC\)](#)

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions about this ACWDL, you may contact the Child Care and Intergenerational Services Bureau at (916) 657-2144 or email CalWORKsHVP@dss.ca.gov.