



Virtual Visitation Guidelines

Guidance and resources to support virtual parenting time

PREPARATION

Prepare parents and caregivers in advance to develop shared expectations, positive anticipation, and plans for addressing potential problems.

- Identify the technology to be used and give it a test run with the parent and the child's caregiver, separately and together, before adding the child.
- Ask the parent where he/she will be and whether she/he will have privacy or not. Encourage the parent and the caregiver to be patient with each other about noise and other distractions, which probably will not be in their control.
- Virtual visits require much more participation and time from the foster/kinship caregivers, who may also be working from home and caring for more than one child. When scheduling, ask about and consider:
 - * The daily routine in the caregiver's home
 - * The number and ages of children in the home, the number of virtual appointments being scheduled
 - * The ability of the child to participate without the caregiver's constant involvement
 - * Whether the caregiver would be comfortable with an older sibling assisting
 - * Other demands on the family's technology, such as virtual schooling
- If a sibling group is involved, have a plan to take turns. To avoid talking over each other, give each child time to talk and explain how this will work at the start of the visit.
- Consider separate visitation for siblings with large age differences, but make sure siblings living separately have time together as well.
- Plan for potential mishaps:
 - * What will be the back-up plan if the video freezes?
 - * What will everyone do if the child doesn't want to participate?
 - * What will everyone do if the child's behavior needs to be addressed?
- Talk to the parent alone before and after the virtual visit, especially for the first few:
 - * Coach the parent to talk positively about the situation, and sound energetic and excited about having contact with the child.
 - * Talk with the parent after the visit so he/she has a time to express emotions of sadness, disappointment, or anger about the situation.
 - * Provide information on how bonding occurs, including the importance of hearing and/or seeing parent(s), to encourage the parent's participation in virtual parenting time.
 - * Discuss the child's developmental stage to assist the parent in identifying activities and/or topics to discuss.
 - * Acknowledge that this will feel different and may be awkward. Discuss in advance that the child may have a hard time staying engaged.
 - * Remind the parent that this is a temporary situation.

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Prepare the child to make the most of the visit:

- Identify the person who will explain the virtual visits to the child, and what the person will say. Be reassuring, nurturing and empathetic.
- Before each visit, in a way the child will understand, tell the child that she is about to see/talk to her parent! Answer all of the child's questions.
- Plan what the parent and caregiver will say and do to support a child who wants to be in-person and is sad or angry.
- Here is a resource to help answer questions about Corona virus and why visits are not in-person: https://28638781-c0c7-460f-81ae-fa6eba3486b9.filesusr.com/ugd/517d15_915f31f39df449a2837c11862a7ab39c.pdf
- Prepare/coach parents to explain the reasons for virtual visitation, normalize the process "for now" It is great that they can visit even if it is not in person

And lastly, you can coach parents and caregivers towards shared parenting principles, using the DCS curriculum here: <https://dcs.az.gov/sharedparenting>

PLAN AHEAD

Arrange virtual parenting time to feel natural, at a length and frequency that matches the child's developmental level

- Consider shorter and more frequent virtual visits for younger children.
- Make every effort to give the parent and child the same amount of time they would have had with in-person parenting time. For example, if two hour sessions were scheduled twice per week, schedule four one hour sessions or eight half hour sessions over the week, depending on how long the child is likely to engage.
- Consider whether contact needs supervision and facilitation by a Parent Aide or Case Aide. If there is no danger to the child during an unsupervised virtual visit, the caregiver may facilitate additional short video or phone contact without needing to schedule with a Parent Aide or Case Aide. Make sure the DCS Specialist is aware of the plan and approves.
- Hold parenting time at a time when parent-child interaction would naturally occur, such as:
 - * Feeding or tummy time for an infant,
 - * Getting ready for bed for a pre-school child,
 - * Reading a bedtime story to a school-aged child, and
 - * Late evening with a teenager.

Plan activities for parent(s)/caregiver(s) to learn and practice parenting skills. Consider these activities:

Infants

- Tummy time
- Make silly faces and interesting sounds
- Ask when infant was last fed and/or if the infant can be fed during visit
- Ask about diaper change and have the parent talk to child during diaper change
- Use colorful and animated objects to attract the child's interest to the screen
- Talk to the baby about their development "Oh look you almost rolled over," etc.

Preschool and School-Aged Children

- Play Show and Tell
- Play I Spy with my Little Eye
- Play with stuffed animals and toys



- Play card games or board games – have the child moves the pieces or play the cards for the parent
- Play dough - put the camera on the play dough so the child can see the parent manipulating it. Take suggestions from the child about what she should make. If the child also has play dough, have her/him try and make the same thing.
- Read books together. Show the pictures close up. Parent can animate their voices for different characters. Having a copy of the same book on each end would enhance the activity.
- Color or draw pictures.
- Play music and freeze when the music stops to play "Freeze Dance."
- Have a talent show or play dress up.
- Have the child share new healthy routines (i.e. brushing teeth, tying shoes, where they take their shoes off, etc.)
- Practice naming colors, shapes, animal sounds and/or counting. Here are some resources:
 - * <https://www.learning4kids.net/exploring-colours/>
 - * <https://teaching2and3yearolds.com/how-to-teach-toddler-colors-fun-15-activities/>
 - * <https://blog.allaboutlearningpress.com/baby-animal-names/>
 - * <https://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/crafts/animal-crafts/animal-activities.htm>
 - * <https://www.education.com/activity/counting/>

Teenagers

- Teach each other how to draw or doodle.
- Write each other's names in cool ways and share them.
- Play video games
 - * <https://adventuresinnanaland.com/fun-games-to-play-over-skype/>
- Engage in meaningful conversations related to how youth is handling situation and/or stress levels

All Children

- Share a meal together
- Parent/child led workout and/or yoga or stretching
- Ask the parent to have something specific to share with each child
- Write a poem together. Here is something to get you started:
 - * I AM POEM (format 1)

Encourage youth to write a poem based on this theme.

Everything about me is unique. I have a special place and purpose in the world. I matter.

Encourage youth to write a poem based on this theme. Youth can feel free to use the following format to write an "I AM" poem to do so. It is easier to begin by having youth describe, in detail the following prompts. Then, have them add "I am" in front of each of them, and change the words accordingly. Youth often don't understand how each of these formats will result in a poem, but they are pleasantly surprised in the end.

Describe, in detail using all five of your senses:

The element of your appearance makes you uniquely you.

Your favorite food.

The home or neighborhood where you grew up.

Your favorite clothes to wear.

Something that makes you happy.

To you happy feels, smells, tastes, looks like . . .

Something that really makes you angry.

To you angry feels, smells, tastes, looks like . . .

One thing I really like about myself is...(could be a trait, characteristic, or physical feature)

I help others by...

Something in the world or our society that I feel very strongly about

I give back to my community by... (volunteering, smiling at others, holding a door open for someone, making a new friend, picking up trash, recycling...)

EXAMPLE:

I am blue-green morphing eyes too expressive to keep a secret.

I am fresh, cool blueberries that explode into sweetness.

I am from riding my bike past trees and concrete, discovering smelly dead bird bodies in vacant lots, chucking oranges at unsuspecting passing cars.

I am sweat pants that give me "junk in my trunk" with a grey t-shirt that is soft as my old blankie.

I am happiness like blue skies, camelback mountain and the smell of citrus blossoms in the air. It feels warm and sweaty followed by cool and refreshed.

I am listening to music with the lights off and head banging, skirt swirling, foot jumping dance moves.

I am NOT dealing with incompetent people who can't keep their promises like they say they will.

I am kindness with green eyes and a lovely smile.

I am choking on pollution, global warming from too many SUV's and mountains of trash.

I am the door opener, especially for old people at my church.

* I AM POEM (format 2)

I am _____ (name)

I am _____ (3 characteristics about me)

I wonder _____ (3 things you are curious about)

I hear _____ (3 sounds, real or imaginary that you hear right now)

I want _____ (3 actual desires you have)

I am _____ (repeat the first line of the poem)

I pretend _____ (3 things you might actually pretend to do or be)

I feel _____ (3 feelings, real or imaginary, you may have)

I touch _____ (3 things, real or imaginary, you may want to touch)

I worry _____ (3 things, real or imaginary, that really might make you worry)

I cry _____ (3 things, real or imaginary that really might make you unhappy enough to cry)

I am _____ (repeat first line of the poem)

I understand _____ (3 things you know are true)

I say _____ (3 things you believe in)

I dream _____ (3 things you actually dream about)

I try _____ (3 things you make an effort to do)

I hope _____ (3 things you actually hope for)

I am _____ (repeat first line of the poem)

* I AM POEM (format 3)

I am from _____ (something you liked about your childhood)
 From _____ (something you NEED in your life)
 AND _____ (something you WANT in your life)
 I am from _____ (something you see every day in your life)
 From _____ (something you regret in your life)
 AND _____ (something you love in nature)
 I am from _____ (a word that describes a physical feature of yours)
 From _____ (something you love)
 AND _____ (something that is relaxing to you)
 I am from _____ (something you miss from your childhood)
 From _____ (a message you heard as a child)
 AND _____ (a word that describes your neighborhood)
 I am from _____ (where you were born)
 I am from _____ (a word that describes your hometown)
 From _____ (what you dream to be when you are an adult)
 AND _____ (your favorite food)
 I am from _____ (location)

- Start an art and/or science project together
 - * <https://www.weareteachers.com/kindergarten-science-activities/>
 - * <https://leftbraincraftbrain.com/40-best-art-projects-for-kids/>
- Sing songs and/or songs with hand motions (i.e. Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes)
 - * <https://www.fatherly.com/play/the-50-best-kids-songs-almost-any-parent-can-sing/>
 - * <https://www.bussongs.com/singalong-songs>
 - * <https://www.letsplaykidsmusic.com/gross-motor-movement-songs/>
 - * <http://www.wonderbaby.org/articles/nursery-rhyme-videos>
- Learn a magic trick
 - * <https://www.care.com/c/stories/4051/easy-magic-tricks-for-kids/>
 - * <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/magic-tricks-for-beginners-and-kids-2267083>
- Assist with homework, learning and/or tutoring
 - * <https://www.readinga-z.com/tutoring-mentoring-packs/>
 - * Keep in mind that virtual learning (school) is occurring while schools are closed and this may be an area of tension for the child and caregiver. Make sure that the parent assisting with homework and learning will be a positive experience for all.
- For more ideas, connect with Free Arts AZ to find resources to transform children’s trauma to resilience through the arts: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTgWgpWE7xE4uJzDizuidRw>

CARING FOR PARENTS

It is important for parent to strengthen their resilience, social connectedness, and health. Emotionally strong parents are better able to be nurturing during virtual parenting time.

- Check on parents more often than normal, especially if the parent lives alone and has few family members and friends
- Discuss with parents how they can maintain their normal routines and schedules of eating, sleeping, getting outdoors, etc.

- Strengthen the parents' protective factors. Find practical suggestions for professionals working with families here: <https://cssp.org/resource/protectivefactorsactionsheets/>
- Identify stressors/stress levels and coach the parent to identify ways to cope. Connect the parent to on-line social activities, support groups, and help-lines. For example:
 - * <https://www.supportgroups.com/>
 - * <https://www.turn2me.ie/group-supports>
 - * <https://www.7cups.com/>
- Identify concrete needs and assist the parent to obtain basic resources, including financial assistance, meals, utility/internet/wireless assistance, etc.
 - * One resource directory is: <https://arizonatogether.org/>
 - * Cox offers two months free internet access, \$10 per month after for families who are new or existing Cox customers without internet services and have at least one K-12 student that participates in the National School Lunch Program; or receive any form of government assistance.

Contact Cox Communications at 1-844-251-2673 or www.cox.com/lowcostinternet to apply.

- Many parents will be worried that the public emergency will delay reunification. Reassure them that they can continue to demonstrate their progress by participating in parenting time, skill sessions, and other virtual services.
- Focus Parent Aide skill sessions on knowledge they can use during virtual parenting time. Provide materials and/or curriculum to parent(s)/caregiver(s) prior to skills sessions via email or other means.
- Here are some tips to share with parents and caregivers: <https://files.constantcontact.com/5a9a4661501/7e35a889-c587-4dac-896a-27c868329c0b.pdf>