Child Intervention
Practice Guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Revised September 24, 2021
UPDATE AS OF 10:30AM SEPTEMBER 24, 2021

As a legislative service, the Ministry is required to continue to fulfill its obligations under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, in particular assessing harm and danger and ensuring the well-being of children.

The safety and wellness of all of our staff and children we serve is paramount. As you are aware, the situation in Alberta is evolving rapidly and we are continuing to assess what it means for Child Intervention service delivery.

This Practice Guidance includes information regarding shifts that we are continuing to make in our approach to adapt Child Intervention service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please note that these instructions will be adapted as Alberta Health’s guidance to Albertans evolves. We commit to providing regular updates. All new updates will be listed on this page and highlighted in the relevant sections.

**Updates as of September 24, 2021:**

The Following Chapters have been revised:
- In-Person Work
- Supports for Permanency
- COVID-19 Reporting and Immunization
- Home Study Reports
- Supports for Caregivers

The following Practice Guidance documents have been removed:
- Court and Legal Matters
- Adoption and Private Guardianship
- Medical Appointments
- Criminal Records Checks
- Group-Congregate Care
- Child and Youth Support Program

If you notice any links are broken, please let us know at CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca.
CI Practice Guidance:
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Table of Contents

In-Person Work
COVID-19 Reporting and Immunization
Supports for Caregivers
Intervention Record Checks
Home Study Reports
Supports for Permanency

Important Links

Alberta Health COVID-19
MyAPS COVID-19 Response
Alberta Health Services COVID-19 Response

Relevant Forms

COVID-19 Reporting Form
Intervention Record Check
Child Maintenance Invoice

Additional Guidance

Alberta Health Screening Questionnaire
Facilities Practice Guidance
IN-PERSON WORK FOR CASEWORKERS/ASSESSORS/GENERALISTS (PRACTITIONERS)

The health and safety of Child Intervention Practitioner’s (CIPs) and of our agency partners has been vital and will continue to be so as Children’s Services and partners move forward through the COVID-19 pandemic.

In-Person Work

CIPs/agency partners will continue face-to-face visits on all matters. CIPs are required to continue their active delegated roles to have in person contact with children AND FAMILIES on their caseload, to continue to develop meaningful connections and build relationships. Things to consider in preparing for in person contact:

- Ensure that you have completed the GOA Formal Hazard Assessment specific to your role BEFORE completing in person contact.
- Supervisors should review the Field Level Hazard Assessment with all CIPs who then can proceed with in person contact with children, youth, families and caregivers. Ensure that this is completed with all new staff prior to in person contact being completed.
- When attending family, caregivers homes or completing unannounced home visits the initial contact and screening will take place at the door, where the worker will ask the AHS screening questions, as needed, regarding risk of illness in the home.
- In person does not necessarily always mean in the home. These decisions should be made in collaboration with the child, youth, family and/or caregiver and based on the need to physically enter a premises and their comfort level for in person visits.
- Preplanning for in person contact and appropriate measures to maintain safety should be completed between the case team prior to attending caregiver’s homes. If multiple workers are involved with children in one home, coordinating the in person contact, supports caregivers who may be overwhelmed with several different workers contacting them and entering their home.
- Approach in person contact with children, families and caregivers in a collaborative way that encourages all to share any concerns which demonstrates appreciation for the anxiety and concern families may have.
CI practitioners should use the COVID Screening Tool whenever possible to ensure no one in the home is sick before attending. If in person visits are cancelled or do not occur due to illness or COVID in the home, the manager must be involved in the decision. In exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of the manager, a face-to-face contact may be completed via videoconference.

When CIPs are responding to urgent matters in person and have determined someone has symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19, as the delegated worker responding to the urgent matter, the CIP is to continue and respond as required.

Ensure you have appropriate PPE prior to leaving your worksite. Ensure that you inform your supervisor if you may have been exposed to COVID-19 so that you are appropriately supported.

**In Person Contact with Children in Care**

- All face to face with children in care in their placements will continue. This means that delegated workers will conduct the required face to face contact with children, both alone and with caregivers as appropriate. Measures to maintain safety will be discussed with the placement in advance.

- CIPs, both child and foster/kinship support and the case team, are required to collaborate to ensure caregivers are not overwhelmed with people entering their home. Caregivers do have a voice in how the public health measure affects them and this must be taken into account when there are provincial and local municipal guidelines in place.

- CIPs are required to continue their active delegated roles to have in person contact with children and families on their caseload, to continue to develop meaningful connections and build relationships.

- CIPs and agency partners should be aware there may be additional precautions or expectations when visiting caregivers’ homes and/or group care settings, such as having your temperature taken with a non-invasive infrared or similar device.

**Select a Location**

Where possible, the location and activities should allow for physical distancing of 2 meters (6 feet), for the example, an outdoors location or a government or agency office (e.g. interview room). If a government or other office is used, hard surfaces will be cleaned appropriately (sanitized) both before and after the visit. This will include phone and electronics, if present.
CI Practice Guidance:
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In Person Visits/Interviews with Children in School Settings

It is important to be aware of school policies and their guidelines and public health measures that may have changed due to COVID-19.

Consideration should be made as to whether or not a child is required to be seen at school or if other arrangements can be made with the guardian or caregiver to meet with the child outside of school hours.

In the event that a child must be seen in the school, ensure that a phone call has been completed prior to attending in person. This will confirm whether a child is in attendance, and will provide an opportunity for the CIP to become familiar with the school’s visitor policy.

When attending a school the CIP is required to follow AHS guidelines, wear appropriate PPE equipment and maintain physical distancing.

Children and youth aged 6-16 enrollment in School

We know that school has been an area of major disruption for children and youth in care. Please connect with your children, youth, families and caregivers to discuss what education options they have chosen for the children in their care. Please remind them that children between the ages of 6-16 are required by law to attend school in some form, whether it is through virtual means or in person.

Screening Tool Questions

When attending a pre-arranged in person meeting, outlined above, contact the parent/guardian, caregiver, agency or community partner and ask the following screening questions as per AHS screening criteria:

- Have you travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days?
- Have you had close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19?
- Have you had close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has travelled anywhere outside of Canada within the last 14 days before their illness?
- Have you had laboratory exposure to biological material (e.g. primary clinical specimens, virus culture isolates) known to contain COVID-19 virus?
- Is there anyone in the home with a fever and/or a cough or shortness of breath?

If require further information on what a close contact is please refer to the AHS website for further guidance.
### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Physical Distancing

CIPs must wear a mask when they are in a CS office or facility, except while alone in work stations (unless proper physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained). CIPs must wear a mask attending a family during a home visit. CIPs will continue to be required to wear a mask when transporting clients and/or agency partners, as well as ensuring anyone in your vehicle is using their mask.

CIPs will maintain physical distancing of 2 metres whenever possible.

CIPs should have hand sanitizer and additional masks on hand to provide to clients if they do not have their own. CIPs are expected continue their delegated roles even if a client refuses to wear a mask. If there are specific concerns about a visit, CIPs should be consulting their manager.

### Tips for Engaging Families when Wearing PPE

Wearing PPE can be scary for both kids and adults. If you can, warn people ahead of time that you will be wearing PPE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Have a proactive conversation with the family about COVID-19.</th>
<th>3. Why are you wearing PPE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check out what caregivers know and have told children about the virus.</td>
<td>Let people know that you wear it to all your visits now to help keep families from getting sick and that it is changed after each visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Tip:</strong> Consider using this resource (it’s available in lots of languages!) to help children understand what all this means: #COVIBOOK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Let people know you don’t usually wear PPE and it feels awkward for you too. Acknowledge that it can make people look scary.</th>
<th>4. Assure people that you can still do your job.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top Tip:</strong> Consider putting a smiley, prominent picture on the outside of your gown/clothes to accompany your ID badge so people can ‘see’ who they are.</td>
<td><strong>Top Tip:</strong> Remember to still smile! How you feel shows on other parts of your face even if your mouth is covered up. Be expressive: body language matters even more now.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>5. Find creative ways to summarize your visit.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Top Tip:</strong> Draw pictures and leave a business card in case there are questions.</td>
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CI Practice Guidance:
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

talking to. Even people that have met you before might not recognize you with PPE.

| Talking to. Even people that have met you before might not recognize you with PPE. | Double check – ask families what they have heard and what they understand. Some people rely on lip reading to help with communication. |

The following resources can be watched or shared with families to explain the new way of visiting:

- PPE (for Kids)
- Physical Distancing (For Kids)

**Family Time**

The CIPs and agency partners will continue to coordinate and make arrangements for in-person visits with children and their families while following the Alberta Health Guidelines. The CIPs will continue their legal responsibility of contacting and connecting with children, youth, families and caregivers to keep them safe and support their well-being including completing all face-to-face contacts. The CIPs will ensure appropriate PPE supplies are available during the visit in the event they become necessary.

The [CMOH Order 42-2021](#) section 6.2 allows CIPs to continue entering homes to complete legislatively required visits and perform other duties. Section 6.2 of this order also allows CIPs to arrange an indoor family visit with siblings or family members from multiple households.

Family Time is essential to the children and youth in our care and for those children who are in the midst of reuniting with their families, collaborate with their supervisor, case team (including caregivers in kinship and foster home) and family network. The Child Intervention Practitioner/agency partners will need to coordinate and make arrangements for in-person visits with children and their families while following the Alberta Health and CI Practice Guidelines.

**Develop a Visitation Plan**

The case team and network will develop a clear Visitation Plan that includes how the risks for COVID-19 exposure will be reduced. This Visitation Plan should include measures to decrease risk and promote infection protection.

**Documenting the Visitation Plan**

The Visitation plan is documented on a contact log in CICIO indicating when and how it was shared with the parent and caregiver(s), and their agreement with the plan. Visitation plans are required to be captured under the Visitation plan tab in CICIO under the name “COVID-19 Visitation Plan”.

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Classification: Protected A

Page 5 of 33
Be Prepared with Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Ensure appropriate PPE supplies are available during the visit in the event they become necessary. (e.g., someone begins to display symptoms during the visit). If any health or safety concerns arise for any individual during the visit, the visit should be ended without unnecessary delay.

**Cultural and Spiritual events and gatherings**

It is important for children, youth, and young people to maintain a connection to their culture and spirituality. While doing so, ensure that all public health orders and safety measures are followed.

**First Nation and Band Consults**

In-person band consultations - As each First Nation is unique in how they are responding to COVID-19 we strongly suggest contacting each Band and DFNA to discuss access to the community. DFNA Directors and staff, and First Nations Designates, continue to be available to discuss child intervention matters. Maintaining connections of a child to their community continues to be a priority. Continue to work in partnership by telephone or using a virtual method of contact.

CIPs are already required by policy to involve the First Nations Designate with information to assist in a child’s case plan. As part of case planning, it is the responsibility of the CIP to provide updates and notify a First Nations Designate as soon as possible in the event that a child were to test positive for COVID-19.

**Attending Funerals and Wakes**

If a child in care’s family member dies, they need to be supported to connect and receive comfort. If a family member passes away and a funeral or wake is being held, support the child in attending the funeral or wake in person. While doing so, ensure that all public health orders and safety measures are followed.

If the child cannot attend the funeral or wake in person, explore other options to have the child attend the funeral or wake virtually, such as Skype or FaceTime.

**Regional, Inter-Regional File Transfers, Interprovincial Requests**

Not all families that we work with remain living in the same home, area, town/city or even the same part of the Province, and therefore will require their files to be transferred
to other offices or regions. Interprovincial requests will require consultation with your supervisor.

Child in Care or Parent Living Outside of Alberta

When a child in care or a parent live outside the province, maintaining contact through alternative measures such as video calls, phone calls and texts is an option as some provinces may have travel restrictions still in place. If an out of province in-person visit is appropriate for the child, travel must be approved by a manager as per Policy 7.4.2.

Click here to return to the Table of Contents.
COVID-19 Reporting

Child Intervention Practitioners are being asked to report and track situations of confirmed POSITIVE COVID-19 cases. Please report information related to a child receiving services (in care or not in care) and/or a parent or caregiver (foster/kinship) who has completed the testing for COVID-19 by Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, and received a positive result.

If you are reporting on behalf of caregivers who have tested positive, please ensure you are not reporting on their biological children or other biological family members (i.e Grandmother or Uncle). The reporting form is only for Children with intervention status and their caregivers, who have tested positive.

Please complete the COVID-19 Reporting Form and send it to CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca. Ensure you provide an update regarding outcomes for the positive reports submitted once the subject of a report is no longer symptomatic, or receives confirmation of recovered status. Phone or email follow up on the report may occur if there are questions or to determine or confirm the outcome of a reported incident.

Note for positive cases in group or campus-based care: If there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case for a child or youth in group or campus-based care copy (cc:) your Regionally Appointed Contact for Group and Campus-Based Care reporting when forwarding the COVID-19 Reporting Form to CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca. If you are unsure of your Regionally Appointed Contact for Group and Campus-Based Care inquire at CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca

- The Regionally Appointed Contact for Group and Campus-Based Care will then ensure the completion of the Group Care Confirmed COVID-19 Case Reporting Form that is also sent to CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca
- If the facility is licensed by a DFNA inform the appropriate DFNA Director. DFNA Directors are asked have the Group Care Confirmed COVID-19 Case Reporting Form completed and sent to CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca
Youth Subject to a Medical Officer of Health Order to Isolate

For any youth who is the subject of a Medical Officer of Health Order regarding non-compliance or refusal to isolate and is to be remanded to a facility identified by AHS for isolation:

1. If the youth has not yet been remanded to the facility for isolation, the caseworker should collaborate with AHS and local police authorities to develop a plan to have the youth transported to the facility.
2. The youth’s delegated worker will be identified as the key contact to AHS and the facility, including their office phone number and/or work mobile number.
3. If a decision that a youth is subject to a Health Order occurs after hours, contact the 24-hour Child Intervention Line (1-800-638-0715) and a delegated worker can respond as required.
4. A special caution needs to be entered into the electronic information system (CICIO), by the delegated caseworker or after hours worker, identifying the youth is subject to a Health Order and the facility they were placed in.

Notification to Parents

For any child that has been directed to self-isolate, is being tested for COVID-19 or has tested positive for COVID-19, notification to the child’s parent(s) is required for all children in temporary care. If a child is in permanent care, but maintains contact with their parent(s), notification is also required. Any updates on a child’s status should also be communicated to the parent(s). THIS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CASEWORKER.

COVID-19 Immunization for Child & Youth 12 and Over

COVID-19 immunizations are available for all Albertans 12 years of age and over. If a child has an underlying medical condition, you MUST consult with a doctor and record this discussion and doctor’s recommendations on a case note in the youth’s file. Follow the Enhancement Policy Manual: Intervention Section, Policy 9.1.7 Immunizations to obtain appropriate consents when arranging for the COVID-19 vaccine for the child or youth.

- The current consent form “Immunization Consent Form and Information Sheet [CS11584]” does not include “COVID-19 vaccine”. The CIP must confirm that the “Other” option is checked on the Immunization Consent form and that “COVID -19 Vaccine” is written in prior to the parent or guardian signing.
- Where available, arrange for the child to have same vaccine for both doses in order to reduce the likelihood of being limited by any future restrictions i.e. travelling to jurisdictions that do not recognize mixed series doses.

For youth not in care or in temporary care who express interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and whose parents/guardians do not support this, continue to work with the family to provide education related to the benefits and safety of the vaccine. In some cases, a youth
under the age of 18 may be declared a ‘mature minor’ for the purposes of making the decision related to vaccination. Talk to their health care provider for more information.

If you have any questions consult with your supervisor or email the COVID mailbox: CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca

**Proof of COVID Vaccination**

CIPs will support caregivers (including facilities) in obtaining the proof of COVID Vaccination for children and youth in care through alberta.ca/CovdRecords. This site requires personal healthcare number, name, birthdate, and month and year of vaccination to access the record. CIPS will ensure that a copy of the vaccination record is on the child’s file. CIPs are also required to document the dates of the vaccinations in CICIO if they haven’t done so following the child or youth’s vaccination. Once the Document Management function comes online through the CICIO Release 4.0, CIPS will upload a copy of the proof of COVID Vaccination to CICIO. A copy should also be provided for children/youth who would benefit from carrying their own card.

If there is a problem accessing the child’s records, proof of COVID vaccination can also be requested from the Participating Registry Agents, pharmacy, physician’s office, public health centre, or as a last resort by calling 811.

CIPs will support young adults receiving services to obtain a copy of their COVID vaccination record.

Child Intervention is not part of the Restrictions Exemption Program requiring proof of vaccination or negative rapid test result. CIPs will not request clients’ proof of COVID Vaccination when providing in-person services. CIPs do not need to provide proof of COVID Vaccination to the clients when providing in-person services.

Children and youth under the age of 18 do not need to show personal identification in addition to the proof of vaccination.

Click here to return to the Table of Contents.

**Forms:**
COVID-19 Reporting Form
All staff must follow the CI Practice Guidance and CI Staff Safety Guidance. Staff and caregivers are also required to follow the most current Alberta Health and municipal guidelines to ensure they are following the current provincial public health orders and safety measures in the caregiver’s community. (See: https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx)

Given the extended period of time of the public health restrictions and the impact on the children and families CS provides services to, it is very important to resume previous practice including caseworker in person contact with children and caregivers. This also means that CS should be proactively planning and facilitating face to face access, family time and participation at cultural events and celebrations for children and youth in care. In person does not necessarily always mean in the home. These decisions should be made in collaboration with the child, youth, family and/or caregiver and based on the need to physically enter a premises and their comfort level for in person visits.

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVERS

COVID-19 Immunization for Child and Youth 12+

As of May 10, 2021 COVID-19 immunizations are available for all Albertans 12 years of age (born on or after 2006). If a child or youth has an underlying medical condition as identified by Alberta Health, you MUST consult with a doctor and record this discussion and the doctor's recommendations in the youth's file. If you have any questions consult with your supervisor or email the COVID mailbox: CS-CI-COVID-19@gov.ab.ca.

Caseworkers will discuss arrangements for child or youth's immunization as needed, including signed consents as necessary and determine who will book and go to the appointment with the youth. Some child or youth’s parents or guardians may be involved in this discussion.

When booking vaccination:

- Provide the parent(s) or guardians with the Information for Parents or Guardians sheet to help with decision-making. Document consent or non-consent on the youth's file. Parents may request a doctor's consult regarding vaccine use.
- Caregivers of these youth may choose to receive the vaccine.
- Where available, arrange for the child to have same vaccine for both doses in order to reduce the likelihood of being limited by any future restrictions i.e. travelling to jurisdictions that do not recognize mixed series doses.
Proof of COVID Vaccination

Caregivers can print the proof of COVID Vaccination for children and youth in their care. The CIP will assist caregivers if they are not able to print the Proof of Vaccination card. Caregivers are to keep a copy for their own records and utilize as required. A copy should also be provided for children/youth who would benefit from carrying their own card.

FAMILY GATHERINGS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Caregiver families are subject to the same health and safety guidelines provided for all community members. When caregivers are planning for events, it is important they continue to monitor Alberta Health and municipal guidelines to ensure they are following the current provincial public health orders and safety measures in their community. Caregivers may also need to discuss with the child’s team (parents, child’s caseworker and/or child’s network) an alternate plan as circumstances might change due to COVID-19 related issues.

ATTENDING FUNERALS AND WAKES

If someone important to the child in care passes away, they need to be supported to connect and receive comfort. If a funeral, wake or other activity is being held, the children or youth should be supported to attend in person and participate when possible.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS

COVID-19 guidance and health measures for schools may change without notice.

For up-to-date information, please refer to Alberta Health or Alberta Education.

https://www.alberta.ca/education.aspx

Also see, Return to School 2021-2022 - Caregiver Message - August 23, 2021 on the CI Portal.

POLICY REFERENCES

Please see Appendix 1 for policy references related to educational supports.

COVID-19 has caused school disruption for children and youth in care and created additional stressors for caregivers. Please connect with your caregivers to discuss any worries they may have. They may require extra support to manage the ongoing changes and unpredictability in caring for the children and youth placed in their home.

The COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan (see below) assists caregiver(s) and the case team with pro-active planning to address any barriers caregivers may have.
MASKS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

CI will reimburse caregivers for masks purchased for children in care through submission of a Child Maintenance Invoice on the child’s file. Caseworkers may approve additional mask purchase if loss or breakage occurs. The same cost limits apply. CSD agencies to follow their usual process for child-related expenses.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

If PPE is required for caregivers, contact your supervisor/manager to determine how best to access it. Caregivers of young children who test positive for COVID-19 may require more PPEs as they will not be able to maintain physical distancing (six feet apart) while caring for the child. The Support Resources for Caregivers on the CI Portal is also another helpful document to share community resources available for caregivers.

ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE REQUIREMENTS

If you test positive, have symptoms or are exposed to COVID-19, see isolation and quarantine requirements and who needs to isolate or quarantine.

COVID-19 CAREGIVER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

The COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan is an individualized plan required for current and new foster and kinship caregivers. The plan should be reviewed and updated as circumstances change.

It identifies the supports required and planning needed to assist caregivers should a member of their household exhibit symptoms of or test positive for COVID-19, or require isolation in the home. Caregivers who are over the age of sixty and/or have pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) as well as any person who is medically fragile, will require prioritized planning if they themselves test positive or someone in their household tests positive for COVID-19. In any of these circumstances, extra safety precautions including PPEs may be required.

The following questions are to promote a robust discussion to assess and identify potential support needs for the caregiver and the child(ren) placed in their home. The questions should be based on the family’s individual circumstances and may not all need to be asked.

Please be mindful that every family has additional stressors and concerns they are dealing with now. Caregivers are balancing the needs of the children they are caring for, impacts of the easing of restrictions, children’s schooling, the needs of their immediate and extended family, possible job loss, increased expenses due to COVID-19, etc.
Caregiver Well-Being

- What has really helped you manage so far during this Pandemic?
- Tell me about your best day/hardest day so far since the start of the Pandemic. What was the best part/hardest part? How did you manage your day?
- Who/what helped you? Is it hard for you to ask for help?
- Who are the people in your life that you can depend on if you are stressed and need help? How can they help you if you need them during the Pandemic?
- Do you have time for self-care? What would help you to take time to look after yourself?

Family Support Needs

- What extra challenges does your family have right now?
- What additional barriers are you worried about if a member of your household exhibits symptoms of, or tests positive for COVID-19, or requires isolation or if you experience an emergency situation that prevents you from providing care?
- What additional challenges are you worried about if a child in your care has to stay home from school or childcare (e.g. work outside the home, supported learning at home, etc...)?
- What educational supports are available through the child’s school if he or she is required to stay home?
- Is there someone within your cohort or support network who can assist you if child(ren) in your care are required to stay home?
- What support(s) do you already have that make providing for the child/youth in your care more manageable during the Pandemic?
- What additional support(s) would make providing for the child/youth in your care more manageable during the Pandemic?

Temporary Caregiver Options

- If you are temporarily unable to provide care or need a break, who could be an alternate caregiver and has a relationship with the child/youth?
- Who does the child or youth and parent(s) say are important people in the child or youth’s life? Could these people be alternate care options? Do you have any worries about these people being alternate caregivers?

Note: Refer to the On-Going Connections Plan. Whenever possible ask the child or youth and parent(s) directly.

- Have you discussed alternate care with your family, friends, child’s network, child’s caseworker, etc.?
- If yes, have any identified alternate caregiver(s) stated they are willing to provide care if a member of your household exhibits symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19, or requires isolation in the home?
Do identified alternate caregivers have any other limitations to offering care? (e.g. not able to provide care in your home, do not have enough space in their home, are working from home or outside the home, a family member is immune compromised, they can only provide care on weekends and not much longer, etc).

**Documentation**

Document discussion with caregiver, all contacts, consultations, decisions, rationales on a contact log, the resulting COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan must be attached and recorded in CICIO (See COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan – Instructions)

Any supports needs identified on the COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan should be reflected on the Kinship Care Support Plan [FC3899], Kinship Care Support Plan (ASKC) sites only (FC11918) or Foster Care Support Plan [FC3605].

(See Financial Supports, Caregiver Support Plans and Child Care sections below.)

**ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY ASSESSMENT FOR CAREGIVERS (FC3606)**

An Environmental Safety Assessment for Caregivers (ESAC) [FC3606] is completed to establish that the physical environment is conducive to the health, safety and well-being of children.

Please follow current Policy and practice regarding completion of the ESAC. The expectation is that the ESAC is completed in person. If there are specific concerns with respect to Covid-19, any decision to complete an ESAC virtually must be done in consultation with the manager. If an exception is approved, please see below for HOW TO COMPLETE A VIRTUAL ESAC “WALK THROUGH” under “RESOURCES”.

**During Home Study Report (For potential foster and kinship care applicants)**

Before finalizing a Home Study Report commenced by video-conferencing technology a delegated Children’s Services worker – e.g. a licensing officer or foster/kinship caseworker – must conduct at least one site visit to assess the family.

Please follow current policy and practice for the completion of home study reports.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

As per current policy and compensation guides, all caregivers receive financial compensation to care for children in their home. All children in care are additionally entitled to receive further specific financial benefits to support them in their placements, some of which are prescribed and some of which are tied to the particular unique situation for the child and the caregiver.

Timely reimbursement for child-related costs is an important support for caregivers. Please process Child Maintenance Invoices as soon as possible to reduce financial stressors caregivers may be experiencing.
• Approaches taken to support children and caregivers during the Covid-19 pandemic are time limited and will not be precedent setting.

**CAREGIVER ILLNESS AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

Due to COVID-19, there is the possibility caregivers will temporarily be away from the home or unable to temporarily provide care. Should a caregiver become ill, the plan and options will be dependent on the individual circumstances of the caregiver family and must be developed in partnership with the entire casework team based on the best interests of the child (see: [COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan and Instructions](#)). In these situations, compensation for supports, such as relief or respite, will be provided by CS (except when this falls under CSD partner’s contract) through a Kinship or Foster Care Support Plan. Please see [Policy Kinship Care: 2.4 Emergency Situations and Foster Care: 3.3.6 Emergency Situations](#) (Placement Resources). See also: [Childcare](#) below for additional information.

**APPROVED ABSENCES**

Current policy indicates kinship and foster caregivers are eligible to receive basic maintenance (as well as skill fees for foster caregivers) during a child or youth’s approved temporary absence from the kinship or foster home. Reasons for an approved absence are listed in Policy 3.3.6 Financial Compensation (Placement Resources). Absences related to COVID-19 will also be considered approved absences.

Current policy provides for seven days at full basic maintenance and skill fees for foster caregivers followed by seven days at 50 per cent, and seven days at full basic maintenance for kinship caregivers followed by seven days at 50 per cent during an approved absence.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the time period for providing full basic maintenance (as well as full skill fees for foster caregivers) during a child or youth’s approved temporary absence has been extended to 14 days. This timeframe can be further extended by the caseworker’s manager in order to maintain the placement.

**CAREGIVER SUPPORT PLANS**

Supports necessary to maintain a child or youth must be identified on the Kinship Care Support Plan [FC3899], Kinship Care Support Plan (ASKC) Pilot sites only (FC11918) or Foster Care Support Plan [FC3605]. In the event the caseworker or support worker is absent, it is important a plan is in place for every child in care and the plan is documented as well as attached in CICIO so other caseworkers can ensure a plan is in place to support the child.
CHILD MAINTENANCE INVOICE

To support caregivers and young adults in being reimbursed for funds in a timely manner, the Child Maintenance Invoice has been converted to an electronic form. The Child Maintenance Invoice can be found on the CI Portal. The process for completing and submitting the form for payment includes:

1. The caregiver/young person completes the form, ensuring all relevant fields are filled in.
2. The caregiver/young person emails the completed, electronically signed form and all related receipts and/or approval letters to the caseworker/administrative assistant.
   a. Pictures or scanned copies of receipts/approval letters are acceptable. The caregiver/young person should retain copies of all original receipts.
3. The caseworker/administrative assistant reviews the form and attached receipts/approval letters (pictures/scanned copies) to ensure accuracy. The administrative assistant completes shaded fields, including generating an invoice number (see directions here).
4. The caseworker/administrative assistant forwards the electronically signed form and all receipts/approval letters to the casework supervisor/expenditure officer.
5. The Casework supervisor/expenditure officer reviews and electronically signs the completed form, then forwards it to the administrative assistant for processing of payment.

POLICY REFERENCES

Please see Appendix 1 for existing policy related to financial supports for caregivers.

CHILD CARE

BABYSITTING, RELIEF, RESPITE, ALTERNATE CHILDCARE

The policy-authorized use of childcare is permissible provided consultation with supervisor is completed and recommendations by Alberta Health Services safety guidelines are followed (see Appendix 2).

PLANNING FOR USE OF CHILDCARE

When childcare is necessary and special consideration is required to support the health and well-being of the child or caregiver, the child’s caseworker and foster or kinship support worker will plan with the caregiver and their support network to identify available options for childcare (see COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan and Instructions). Staff will support caregivers who do not have a plan with identifying potential childcare options.

AUTOMATIC RELIEF/RESPITE

Prior approval is not required and the caseworker must be informed of the provider. All safety checks are required as per regular policy.
CI Practice Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

(see: COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan and Appendix 2: Existing Childcare Policy Supports for Children in Care and Modifications During the COVID-19 Pandemic)

DOCUMENTATION

In addition to documenting on a contact log, the resulting COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan must be attached and recorded in CICIO (see COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan – Instructions).

Children’s Services must always be able to locate children in care. Please use the “Placement” tab under Removals & Placements in CICIO to edit placement information and adding in comments when children are in either respite or relief care (see: CICIO User Guide, pg. 287).

Below is a chart outlining current policy and COVID-19 adjusted practice. Any childcare arrangements must be discussed with child’s caseworker as well as foster or kinship support worker and approved by a supervisor.

POLICY REFERENCES

Please see Appendix 2 for existing policy related to childcare supports for caregivers.

TRAVEL

 *****Please see updates regarding travel on Alberta.ca and Government of Canada  ****

If the director is not the sole guardian of the child or youth, travel cannot proceed without approval from the guardian. See Policy 7.4.2 Approving Travel.

In addition to what is currently outlined in Policy 7.4.2, regarding all travel discuss with caregiver(s):

- They must follow Alberta Health Services safety guidelines.
- what additional safety measures will be taken to mitigate risk of exposure to COVID-19 or other influenza-like illnesses to ensure child or youth safety and well-being including masks for when physical distancing is not possible and hand sanitizer when hand washing is not available,
- any special needs including increased health risks the child or youth may have with potential exposure to COVID-19 or other influenza-like illnesses and planning to address these needs (other professionals may need to be consulted), and
- travellers may be subject to additional restrictions and health measures during their travels and at their final destination. Ensure that the caregiver is aware of any restrictions or advisories at their expected destination, as this information may change.

TRAVEL WITHIN ALBERTA

- Travel within Alberta must be approved by a casework supervisor as per Policy 7.4.2.
  - Please See: COVID-19 travel requirements.
**TRAVEL BETWEEN PROVINCES**

- Travel between provinces must be approved by a manager as per Policy 7.4.2.
  - Please See: [COVID-19 travel requirements](#).

**TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF CANADA**

- Travel outside of Canada must be approved by a Category 4 Director or DFNA Director as per Policy 7.4.2. Requests for travel must follow the [COVID-19 travel requirements](#).

**DOCUMENTATION**

Document all contacts, consultations, decisions, rationales and caregiver’s plan on the contact log in CICIO.

**FIRST AID TRAINING FOR CAREGIVERS**

*Placement Policy - Foster Care 3.2.7 Environmental Safety* requires that each licensed foster parent hold a valid first aid certificate.

- Consider these exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis and consult with your supervisor and/or case team if a caregiver is considered high risk or there are medical conditions which impede the caregivers ability to complete in-person first aid training.

See [First Aid Training](#) for further information about the COVID-19 response to training and for a list of approved training agencies for worksites.

**Document**

Record as Supplemental Training under the Credentials tab in CICIO.

Click [here](#) to return to the Table of Contents.

**Links:**

- [Child Maintenance Invoice Form](#)
### APPENDIX 1: EXISTING POLICY SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Staff Role During Pandemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.3 (Placement Resources) Kinship Support Plan</strong> [FC3899]</td>
<td>MANDATORY! Initial and on-going supports assist kinship care providers in meeting the needs of children placed in their homes; ensures kinship care providers have any supports they may need to successfully care for the children.</td>
<td>Complete a collaborative assessment with the kinship caregiver and child’s case team to identify COVID-19 related support needs and include them on the kinship support plan. Review if circumstances change. Form FC3899: Check “Other” under “Situation” and write “COVID-19” in the line below. Include details of the situation requiring the kinship support plan. Include details of supports required under “Support Services”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.4 (Placement Resources) Kinship Financial Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Financial compensation to care for children in their home; every child is unique; caregivers may be compensated for other needs that may arise that are consistent with the care of the child; child entitlements.</td>
<td>Additional Supports: Use the listed compensation and entitlements plus there is extensive flexibility in addressing factors that could become a barrier to caring for a child. Please consider the guiding principles. Special Costs: exceptional expenditures; caseworker consultation required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3.5 (Placement Resources) Foster Care Support Plan</strong> [FC3605]</td>
<td>A foster care support plan applies when there are ...exceptional circumstances of a foster home to help provide foster parents with the supports necessary to meet the needs of children in their care.</td>
<td>Foster care support plans require the approval of the caseworker’s supervisor; however, it is expected that such approval will not be unreasonably withheld and will be exercised in a manner enabling the provision of the right services to maintain the child’s well-being. Use the principles outlined at the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CI Practice Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form FC3605 - Check “Other” under “Situation” and write “COVID-19” in the line below. Include details of the situation requiring the foster care support plan. Include details of supports required under “Support Services”.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.3.6 (Placement Resources) Foster Care Financial Compensation</strong></td>
<td>Financial compensation to care for children in their home; child <em>entitlements.</em></td>
<td>Additional Compensation: equipment or supplies to facilitate or support placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Special Costs: consider exceptional expenditures; caseworker consultation required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy 9.2 (Intervention) Education</strong></td>
<td>Accessing appropriate educational programming that meets the child’s needs.</td>
<td>Collaborate with Education and caregiver partners to develop a plan and advocate for appropriate programs and supports. This will include ensuring caregivers have access to all additional technology and any other additional support (i.e. tutoring support). Required supports can be claimed as educational expenses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX 2:
**EXISTING CHILDCARE POLICY SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE AND MODIFICATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**POLICY 3.4 (PLACEMENT RESOURCES) CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR CAREGIVERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Care Options</th>
<th>Babysitting</th>
<th>Relief</th>
<th>Respite</th>
<th>Alternate Child Care</th>
<th>Modified approach during COVID-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Short-term care (not overnight).</td>
<td>Caregiver away for an extended period of time.</td>
<td>Provided to caregivers caring for children with complex needs or for exceptional circumstances of a caregiver.</td>
<td>Caregivers who work out of the home or attend school and have alternate child care providers (e.g. nannies) who relate to the child in a parenting capacity.</td>
<td>Need for respite and identified as essential (ex. set up prior to COVID-19 and ongoing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk of caregiver burnout (need a break).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Caregiver is temporarily unable to care for the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Caregiver or family member is sick or tests positive for COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Up to 12 hours on any one occasion; usually occurs in the caregiver’s home.</td>
<td>Overnight, weekend, a week at a time.</td>
<td>As outlined in a support plan.</td>
<td>Regular and ongoing basis.</td>
<td>As required and discussed with the child’s caseworker and foster and kinship support worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Checks</td>
<td>Caregivers hire babysitters at their discretion, considering the</td>
<td>An Intervention Record Check (IRC) is required for</td>
<td>Must be provided out of the caregiver’s home by</td>
<td>A Criminal Record Check (CRC) with</td>
<td><strong>Must follow Alberta Health and AHS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This does not apply to licensed childcare providers (e.g. day care, family day home etc.) as defined under the *Child Care Licensing Act.*
## CI Practice Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>maturity, skill level and experience of the babysitter as well as the number and special needs of the children.</td>
<td>the relief care provider as well as any additional information requested by the caseworker.</td>
<td>licensed foster parents or residential facilities.</td>
<td>Vulnerable Sector Search and an IRC.</td>
<td>guidelines to mitigate the risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The babysitter must be able to reach the caregiver in the event of an emergency.</td>
<td>Caregivers must provide the name, address and contact information of the relief care provider, the dates the child will be in relief care, and the names of any other persons in the relief caregiver’s home to the caseworker and foster and kinship support worker.</td>
<td>Caregivers must provide the caseworker’s contact information to the caregiver for emergency use, in addition to the caregiver’s contact information.</td>
<td>The foster and kinship support worker or caseworker will conduct face-to-face interview of the childcare provider.</td>
<td>AHS Screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Babysitting will be reimbursed as per the Caregiver Rate Schedule [FC1263].</td>
<td>Automatic Relief/Respite: As per the Caregiver Rate Schedule [FC1263], caregivers will be reimbursed for two days a month for each child placed in their home and can bank up to six days to be used at one time. Prior approval is not required.</td>
<td>Caregivers compensate alternate childcare, or may have costs included in their support plan.</td>
<td>Caregivers must provide the caseworker’s contact information to the alternate caregiver for emergency use, in addition to the caregiver’s contact information.</td>
<td>IRC as per current practice. See CI practice guide for further information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Automatic Relief/Respite: Due to potential need for further relief/respite after the COVID-19 Pandemic, a caregiver can bank up to 12 days that may be used at one time. Prior approval is not required.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Compensa

See Compensation Guide - [FC1263]
**RESOURCES**

**HOW TO COMPLETE A VIRTUAL ESAC “WALK THROUGH”**

1. Ensure the caregiver has Wi-Fi, a compatible device and FaceTime (or whatever video application you have chosen to use). Some caregivers may need to practice using the technology and to work through any troubleshooting prior to completing the ESAC.
2. Forward a copy of ESAC form [FC3603] to the caregivers prior to commencing your virtual visit. Ask the caregiver to print out the form or have it available to be read easily on their phone or tablet.

3. A delegated Children’s Services worker – e.g. a licensing officer or support worker – will complete the ESAC.

4. The worker will discuss with the caregiver the reason and rationale for the items listed on the ESAC as it relates to child safety and well-being.

5. The worker will confirm the items listed on the ESAC by asking the caregiver to show the items/location (e.g. hot water tank set to medium) during a ‘walk through’ of their home.

6. Discuss with caregivers any worries identified during the ‘walk through’ and develop a plan with the caregiver to address them. For example: When completing the ESAC virtually how confident is the worker that they were able to assess the safety of the home?

7. Worker will record on the ESAC that the home visit was completed virtually.
   a. Confirm compliance with items on the ESAC as well as any safety concerns and outstanding items.

8. Document also on a contact log that the home visit was completed virtually.
   Document all discussions with the applicant or caregiver, including any outstanding items or worries.

9. Plan with the caregiver how any outstanding items or worries will be addressed, as well as when and how the worker will follow up with the caregiver.

10. Support the caregiver to meet the obligations outlined in the ESAC on an ongoing basis.

Click here to return to the Table of Contents.
INTERVENTION RECORD CHECKS

As of March 19, 2020 all IRCs can be sent to the centralized IRC mailbox for processing – CS-IRCrequest@gov.ab.ca.

The IRC has been converted to a digital form and can be accessed on the CI Portal. This should be completed electronically and emailed to the centralized IRC mailbox for processing.

The following instructions for completing the digital IRC form should be provided to the individual requesting the IRC:

- They need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader on their device to complete the digital form.
- Do not print out the digital form to complete. This should only be completed digitally.
- Ensure all sections on the first page are complete, including consents where they need to check the tick box, type in their name, and fill in the date,
- Attach a scan or photo of their government issued identification,
  - The ID should include the requestor’s name, birth date and signature.

This digital form is intended for use with agencies, caregivers and members of the public required to have an IRC completed.

For Hard-copy IRC request forms received – staff are to scan all of the documents required (form and identification) and email them to CS-IRCrequest@gov.ab.ca.

If the office gets a call from the public, staff are to provide the requestor with the digital IRC form and instructions above and ask the requestor to email the digital form and their identification to CS-IRCrequest@gov.ab.ca.

The completed IRCs will then be sent back to the region or the individual who requested it. If the requester has any questions or if they receive a positive check they were not expecting, they can contact the individual who completed their IRC.

Click here to return to the Table of Contents.
HOME STUDY REPORTS

Home Study Reports (HSRs) for Prospective Kinship or Foster Caregivers and Applicants for General Adoption or Private Guardianship

(Refer to In – Person guidance before conducting in person visits/interviews)

NOTE: This section is specific to applicants who are NOT current caregivers to children in government care. These applicants are seeking to become approved for kinship care, foster care, or adoption/private guardianship of children not yet in their care.

- The foundational practice expectation for the home assessment process is in-person information gathering. If applicants are unable or unwilling to meet in person, please discuss modified arrangements with your manager.
- These instructions are to assist workers in applying these agreed-to modifications, as necessary, to their particular case circumstances.
- Preparing and completing SAFE Home Study, Assessment and Support for Kinship Caregiving (ASKC Pilot), or regulated Home Study Reports (collectively Report) is a critical process in planning for children’s placements and evaluating the overall suitability of both prospective and current caregivers.
- Guided by legislation, regulation and policy, the home study process dictates evaluation of outside evidence (e.g. Criminal Record Checks, Intervention Record Checks and medical and personal references).

HSRs Underway

- A minimum of four interviews are required and should take place in the applicants’ home. The interviews with the family must include joint and individual interviews with the applicants, individual interviews with others residing/frequently in the home including children and other adults, interviews with references, and any other collateral contacts deemed necessary with the applicant’s written consent. Best practice is to complete interviews on separate dates.
- The comfort level of applicants in having contacts/exposures may still vary requiring some modifications. Should modifications be required during a HSR that is underway, and if the home assessor for the HSR has had at least one interview in the applicant’s home to assess safety issues, discuss completing the balance of the interviews through use of technology such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime or other telephone or video-conferencing mechanisms with your manager. In-person interviews are highly recommended.
- If SAFE is being used, Questionnaire 2 must have been completed during the in-home interview.
• Use appropriate privacy settings on the technology platform you are using to maintain confidentiality and review Enhancement Policy and Practice Supports on Technology and Social Media Use. (Please refer to and follow the attached Basic Video Interviewing Tips).

HSRs – Interviewing via Technology and HSR Approval
• The comfort level of applicants in having contacts/exposures may still vary, requiring some modification with manager approval. For HSRs that have not yet commenced, in-person interviews are preferred. Conducting interviews through a combination of in-person and technology such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime or other video-conferencing mechanisms is allowed following consultation with your Manager. This allows for flexibility for the applicants. (Please refer to and follow the attached Basic Video Interviewing Tips).
• The number of interviews required to complete the HSR remains as outlined in Policy.
• If SAFE is being used, Questionnaire 2 must be completed during an in-home interview.
• Use appropriate privacy settings on the technology platform to maintain confidentiality and review the Enhancement Policy and Practice Supports on Technology and Social Media Use.
• Before finalizing an HSR commenced by video-conferencing technology, a delegated Children’s Services worker – e.g. a licensing officer or support worker – must conduct at least one site visit to assess the family.
  – The attending worker must read the draft Report prior to attending at the home
    ▪ All family members should be present
    ▪ Complete the Environmental Safety Assessment for Caregivers during this visit. This is an opportunity to interact with the family more thoroughly and see the home fully. This is essential prior to approving a new home.
  – Should the worker find any concerns (relationship or environmental safety) during the visit, address those concerns.
  – The family should be aware that this visit requirement is part of the assessment process and may impact their approval.

HSRs – General Adoption Applicants
• Applicants for general adoption must submit all documentation required to support their application before the home assessment process may begin (i.e. a criminal record check, an intervention record check, a completed medical reference, and personal references).
• Provide applicants with any available information and guidance on how to obtain necessary documentation.
• The comfort level of applicants in having contacts/exposures may still vary, requiring some modification. Should modifications to the interview process be required where a home assessment process was previously initiated, and if at least one interview was conducted in the applicant’s home to assess safety issues, the balance of the of the interviews may be conducted through use of such technology as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime or other video conferencing mechanisms, following consultation with your
CI Practice Guidance:
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

manager (Please refer to and follow the attached Basic Video Interviewing Tips). Where applicants have submitted all required documentation, the home assessment process may be initiated and conducted through use of technology so long as the assessment process includes one visit to the applicant(s) home to assess safety issues. Approving the applicant(s) for adoption is contingent on this requirement.

- If SAFE is being used, Questionnaire 2 must be completed during the in-home interview.
- Refer to and follow the detailed direction provided in the above section – HSRs – Interviewing via Technology and HSR Approval.
- If there are case specific circumstances that require special consideration, have your case team follow a third-person consult process for joint decision-making.
- As needed, contact Adoption Services for assistance.

Addendums or Home Study Reports (HSRs) for Current Caregivers
Moving to Legal Permanency
(Adoption or Private Guardianship)

NOTE: This section is to assist staff and practitioners in moving forward with completion of addendums or home study reports (HSRs) for families who are current kinship or foster caregivers to children in government care, and who are moving forward with a plan of legal permanency (adoption or private guardianship) of children or youth currently in their care.

- The foundational practice expectation for the home assessment process is in-person information gathering. The comfort level for caregivers in having contacts/exposures may still vary, requiring some modification to practice protocols.

Addendum Guidelines and Expectations

When to Complete an Addendum

- As these are current kinship or foster caregivers, most will already have a completed HSR which approved them as placement providers. In these situations, completing a thorough Addendum to Home Assessment Report (Child Specific Legal Permanency) (ADOP12108) for the purposes of legal permanency will generally be the appropriate assessment process to follow.
- As there is a pre-existing relationship and previous in-person contact with the caregiver, a worker who is familiar with the family, can complete addendum interviews necessary to the addendum.
- These interviews are to be conducted in-person. The comfort level of caregivers in having contacts/exposures may still vary, requiring some modification to practice protocols. Should modifications be required, the use of technology such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime or other video-conferencing mechanisms may be used after consultation with your manager.
CI Practice Guidance:
Coronavirus (COVID-19)

- Use appropriate privacy settings on the technology platform to maintain confidentiality and review CYFEA Policy and Practice Supports on Technology and Social Media Use. (Please refer to and follow the attached Basic Video Interviewing Tips).

**Video Interviewing Tips**

Find a quiet, private, well-lit place, free from possible interruptions.

- Avoid coffee shops and other communal spaces.
- Ensure privacy for the interviewee. Use strong privacy controls on the technology.
- Ensure your internet connection is stable.
- Check that your computer’s audio is working.
- Test your computer’s webcam.
- Close any unnecessary web browser tabs and applications. Make sure you are not downloading anything in the background.
- Place your phone in silent mode.
- Position your webcam so that you have a neutral background that is free from distractions.
- Avoid the instinct to look directly at your interviewee on the screen. Instead, when you speak, you want to direct your gaze at the webcam. When you do this, your eyes are more likely to align with the interviewee’s eyes on the other end.
- When you are listening, you can look back at the screen.
- Use hand gestures when it feels appropriate and keep your movements close to your body. Avoid fidgeting or letting your gaze drift away from the device.
- Set out a glass or bottle of water for yourself.
- Adjust the lights in the room. If things appear dark or dim, you may want to bring in an extra desk lamp to brighten the space.
- Throughout the interview, keep your mood upbeat and convey optimism with your body language. One way to achieve this is to have good posture. Sit in your chair with your back straight and your shoulders open. When you are listening, nod and smile when appropriate to communicate that you are giving them your full attention.

If things go wrong – it is OK to reschedule

With technology, there is always a chance things could go wrong. Here are some backup plans to have ready just in case.

- **If your video or audio stops working**
  Before the interview, ask them for a phone number where you can reach them if you experience technical difficulties. If the video cuts out, call them at that number. Ask if you can continue the interview by phone or if you can reschedule.

- **If noise interrupts the conversation**
  If noises (sirens, construction, etc.) interrupt your video interview, apologize for the interruption and ask for a few moments until the noise has subsided. You may want to mute the microphone if the noise is severe.

- **If someone enters the room unexpectedly**
  If family members, housemates or pets enter the room while you are interviewing, apologize to the interviewee, ask for a few moments, mute your microphone and turn off
your camera, and then step away to deal with the interruption. Make sure that the room is secure before beginning the interview again.

Click here to return to the Table of Contents.

Quick link to the Intervention Record Check Chapter.
SUPPORTS FOR PERMANENCY

Signing or Modifying Supports for Permanency Agreements

Policy should be referenced (12.2 Entering into an Agreement and 12.3 Negotiating Provisions) for general guidance on how to enter into and what can be negotiated within a Supports for Permanency (SFP) Agreement, and how this is to be done. Although negotiating an agreement in-person is preferred, it is possible to negotiate an agreement by way of telephone, Skype, FaceTime or another conferencing platform with manager approval.

Once terms are agreed to, a copy of the agreement can be emailed to the SFP recipient. The SFP recipient will need to print, sign, scan and email the document back to the worker as soon as possible.

SFP recipients should be advised that they are required to sign and mail the agreement with original signatures back to the worker. An original signed agreement is required on the file. All agreements should be captured in the electronic case management system.

Additional Respite

The number of hours a family can receive respite services for in any given year is regulated at 576. Per Regulations, there is no capacity to increase the number of hours for respite under SFP. If the family has not negotiated for the maximum number of hours allowable in their current SFP Agreement, a new agreement can be entered into that provides for a greater number of hours. If the family has already negotiated for the maximum allowed under SFP, and the child qualifies for Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) services, additional hours through FSCD could be explored.

Additional Needs Funding and Exceptional Circumstances

SFP provisions are strictly regulated, so latitude can only be exercised within their established parameters. For instance, respite can be used strategically, as can additional needs funding, so long as maximums allowed within the regulation are not exceeded.

For example, if a child’s placement in a facility has broken down necessitating the child’s return to the family home, and the family is having or likely to have difficulty managing the child’s needs, the case team should first work with the family to identify natural supports and other available support services they can access. If the child is eligible for FSCD support, for instance, collaboration with that program to broker support services is appropriate.
Family circumstances will vary; however, if the SFP case team determines a breakdown is likely without provision of exceptional supports, an assessment for Intervention Services may be indicated.

Additionally, if it has been confirmed that a child will need technology in order to support their continued learning, and their school is unable to provide the child with the necessary technology, additional needs funds can be applied to purchase the required device(s). Under normal circumstances, additional needs funds could be used for such a purpose if it was agreed in negotiation that it meets an emotional or behavioural need of the child. This provision has a lot of latitude, intentionally.

**FSCD Interim Policy Changes**

For information pertaining to the steps FSCD has taken, please visit their [website](#). Contact your families’ FSCD workers to learn about specific impacts to their services, if any.

Click [here](#) to return to the Table of Contents.