

# Interim Guidance for Home Visiting Services by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

September 16, 2021

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the spread and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The purpose is to guide local maternal and child health programs and home visiting programs on 1) assessing the safety before starting a home visit; and 2) preventing the spread of COVID-19 among individuals, families, and communities. KDHE will provide updated guidance as necessary based on the changing situation. Please check the [CDC website](#) and the [KDHE website](#) (COVID-19 Resource Center) periodically for updated information and guidance for a variety of settings as well as public health and health care professionals. Other information and help are available on the Governor's [Kansas COVID-19 Response and Recovery website](#).

## **Planning and Preparedness Recommendations for Home Visiting Programs**

Home visitors partner with parents to support the healthy growth and development of children. Services provided through home visiting programs are critical to ensuring the ongoing health and safety of children and families. **Therefore, it's important to public health and families that programs continue operations, as long as it is deemed safe to do so by state and local health officials.**

As the state and jurisdictions decide to slowly integrate back to face-to-face home visits, programs may identify a need to visit a family to provide ongoing support or deliver necessary supplies. In these cases, prior to making home visits, home visitors and staff should first make sure they are following the prevention basics provided in the COVID-19 resource, [Guidance for Workers Who Visit Homes](#).

All local agency staff entering homes should determine their requirements for families/individuals receiving services in the home. Requirements should be based on organization/agency guidelines and guidance from local public health officials.

Home visitors are well positioned to assess, promote, and model good hygiene as well as provide guidance to clients and their families on how to stay safe, monitor their own symptoms, and when to seek medical care. Home visiting programs operating during the outbreak should:

- **First and foremost**, follow the guidance, policies, and procedures of your home agency and local county health department/local health officer. The most current information always resides at the community level.
- Stay informed and know where to go for the most current information. Sources of accurate information include the CDC, KDHE, and your local county health department/local health officer.
- Develop or update emergency preparedness and continuity of operations plans to address possible disruptions in program operations that include the following:

- Critical functions and positions and plan for alternative coverage in the event of staff absences or closure;
- Methods to communicate with staff and parents in the event of closure; and
- Flexible sick leave policies that encourage staff to stay home when sick or when caring for sick family members.

In addition to the prevention basics, Home Visiting programs should contact the families prior to the home visit and screen for the following:

1. Signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, cough, fever (100.4 or greater), chills, muscle pain, sore throat, congestion, nausea, diarrhea, new loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, sudden confusion, being unable to respond to others, or blue lips or face. NOTE: The CDC and KDHE websites have updated lists of signs and symptoms of COVID-19 along with guidance on when to seek medical attention.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>  
<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/224/What-to-do-if-you-think-youre-sick>
2. Contact within the last 14 days with: a confirmed COVID-19 case, someone under investigation for COVID-19, or someone exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or other respiratory illness.
3. The immune status/risk of household members: those who have a weakened immune system, over the age of 60 years, have chronic health conditions (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, diabetes), or other COVID-19 risk factors.
4. Travel and/or exposure events: those who have traveled to the locations included on the KDHE COVID-19 Resource Microsite [Travel and Exposure Related Isolation / Quarantine page](#) need to quarantine upon arrival in Kansas. The [length of quarantine](#) varies depending on whether you have been tested for COVID-19.

NOTE: When local staff arrive at the home, reassess risk by asking the same questions at the time of arrival and before entering the home/clinic/location for the visit.

If the answer to any of these questions is yes OR the family prefers not to have an in-person visit, the visit should be rescheduled for a later date or conducted virtually.

- As a general rule, reschedule the visit no earlier than at least 14 days. The 14-day recommendation is based on current guidance for isolation and self-quarantine related to COVID-19. Refer to KDHE guidance here: [What to do if You Think You're Sick | KDHE COVID-19 \(kdheks.gov\)](#)
- KDHE supports the use of telehealth (telephone, text, secure phone line and secure virtual/video conferencing through platforms such as Zoom) rather than in-person home visits, team building, and staff meetings; when possible and appropriate, to keep families connected with the home visitors while practicing social distancing and managing community risks. Telehealth can/should to be used in lieu of in-person visits in cases where the client, anyone in the household, or the home visitor shows signs of illness noted above.

Always consult the guidance of your local health department or model before changing the method of home visiting delivery. If the local health agency supports the decision

that going into the home is within the best interest of the family, then home visitors and staff should continue to take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These precautions include:

- Frequently wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when handwashing is unavailable.
- Clean commonly used surfaces (e.g., countertops, tables, doorknobs) regularly with disinfectant (pregnant women should wear gloves or use green products with disinfectant agent, or ideally have another household member clean the surface when possible).
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Cover your coughs (coughing into your elbow).
- Get vaccinated for Influenza now, if you haven't already.
- Practice social distancing – avoid gathering in groups if possible; keep a distance of at least 6 ft.
- Wear a mask. Masks should be worn in public settings by people over the age of 2 years in addition to staying 6 feet apart, especially when indoors and around people who don't live with you.
  - KDHE recommends wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose, mouth and chin with multiple layers of fabric. Alternatively, a thinner disposable mask may be worn under a cloth face mask to improve the fit.
  - Masks should NOT be worn by children under age 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing.
  - If possible, local agency staff should carry a few extra disposable masks to provide to families/individuals without masks. That way the visit may proceed without having to be rescheduled.
  - **IF** the local agency providing services has a policy requiring individuals receiving services to wear a mask, it needs to be communicated **BEFORE** the visit takes place. Discuss the requirement when making the appointment for the visit and when the family/individual is being screened for in-person visit requirements (i.e. prescreening for symptoms, travel, and exposure).
  - Find KDHE Mask Guidance for adults and children [here](#).

Here are some additional considerations for home visiting staff and supervisors:

- Any home visitor with signs and symptoms of a respiratory illness or other related illness should not report to work.
- Staff at high risk of severe complications (those who are older or have underlying health conditions) should not conduct in-person home visits with sick clients.
- If a home visitor develops signs and symptoms of illness while on the job, they should stop working immediately, notify their supervisor, follow state and local health department protocols, and self-isolate at home immediately.
- If after delivering a home visit, a home visitor is identified as being positive for COVID-19, they should notify their supervisor and follow current CDC, local and state health department guidance.
- Emotional reactions to stressful situations such as this public health emergency are expected. Home visitors and other program staff should take self-care

measures and be proactive in stress management.

## More Information

### Mental Health Resources

- [Taking Care of Yourself](#)
- [Maintaining Positive Mental Health](#)
- [Talking with Children and Adolescents about COVID-19](#)
- [SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Hotline](#)
- [Reducing Stigma](#)

### KDHE Resources

- [COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Mask Guidance](#) (Updated 5-1-2021)
- [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Vaccinated Kansans](#)
- Information Line -866-534-3463 (1-866-KDHEINF) Monday – Friday 8 am to 5pm

### CDC Resources

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 General Website](#)
- [About Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick](#)
- [Use Masks to Slow the Spread](#)
- [Potential COVID-19 Exposure Associated with Travel](#)
- [Prevent Getting Sick](#)
- [Communities, Schools, Workplaces, and Events](#)
- [Information on COVID-19: Pregnant Women and Children](#)
- [Guidance Documents for the General Public](#)

### Federal Maternal & Child Health Bureau (HRSA, MCHB)

- [Coronavirus FAQs](#)

