

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

Updated December 16, 2020

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 local 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](#).

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 (greater than 100), 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 10-14 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.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>
4. Travel with the last 10-14 days in a state or country identified as a hot spot. This applies to both Kansas residents and those visiting Kansas. Please refer to the [KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center](http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/index.htm) (<http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/index.htm>) for latest travel restrictions.

If the family answers positively to any of the above screenings prompts 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 7 days (if the client has no symptoms and a negative PCR test) or 10 days (if the client has no symptoms and has not had a PCR test). This recommendation is based on current [guidance for self-quarantine](#) related to COVID-19. Please refer to the [KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center](#) (<http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/index.htm>) for the most current recommendations for quarantine and isolation and how to prevent spread.
- KDHE supports the use of telehealth (telephone, text, secure phone line and video conferencing through platforms such as Zoom) rather than in-person home visits, 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 in 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 and staying at home:
    - o Only go out for essential items.
    - o Avoid gathering in groups.
    - o Keep distance of 6 feet, if you must go out, wear a cloth mask.
- NOTE: Masks should never be placed on children younger than 2.

Resources to help prevent the spread of COVID-19:

<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/225/How-to-protect-yourself-and-others>  
<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/119/Reduce-the-Spread-PDF>

### The Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Public Settings

- An Executive Order, effective Friday, July 3, 2020, requires most Kansans to wear a mask while in a public space. Kansans should cover their mouth and nose with a mask or other face covering while in public setting where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (**NOTE children five years and under are exempt from the requirement. Children two years and under in particular should not wear a mask or cloth face covering because of the risk of suffocation**). Details on this order found here: [Executive Order No. 20-52 - Governor of the State of Kansas](#).
- Local governments retain the authority to issue and enforce equally or more restrictive orders or provisions. Counties may also exercise authority granted by K.S.A. 48-925 as amended by 2020 Special Session House Bill 2016, Sec.33.
- Enforcement of this order will take place at the local community level.

- 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.
- **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).
- 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 question is yes, act as directed above.
- If it is determined after reassessment of risk that the in-person visit can proceed, the family/individual receiving services should be reminded of the requirement to wear a mask at this time (if applicable).
- 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.

We understand that this is a stressful time for home visitors and other home visiting program staff. 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 COVID-19 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](#)

### **KDHE Resources**

- [COVID-19 Resource Microsite](#)
- Information Line 1-866-534-3463 (1-866-KDHEINF) Monday – Friday 8 am to 5 pm
- [Kansas Homemade Mask/Cloth Covering Guide](#)
- [Children and Masks](#)

### **CDC Resources**

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 website](#)
- [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Prevent the Spread](#)
- [Health Alert Network: Update and Interim Guidance on Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)
- [About Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick with COVID-19](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Persons Who May Have Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) to Prevent Spread in Homes and Residential Communities](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travelers](#)
- [Prevent Getting Sick](#)
- [Communities, Schools, Workplaces, and Events](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick](#)
- [Information on COVID-19: Pregnant Women and Children](#)
- [Guidance for People at Higher Risk for COVID-19](#)
- [Reducing Stigma and Promoting Resilience](#)

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

- [Coronavirus FAQs](#)

