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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye
Commissioner

DATE: March 23, 2020

TO: Providers of Services to Young Children

FROM: Beth Bye, Commissioner

RE: Coronavirus Memo #10
Home Visiting: Virtual and Telehealth

The Office of Early Childhood is writing to provide guidance to our funded Home Visiting providers to ensure stability of programs during this very challenging COVID-19 situation. We are working hard to communicate clearly because we know that consistent and accurate information from the OEC is important for your program.

Home Visiting- Virtual and Telehealth:

During this unprecedented time, **providers shall move from face-to face home visits to virtual visits, effective immediately and until otherwise noticed**. Our primary concern is for the safety of home visiting staff and the families they serve. Second, national offices of evidence-based home visiting models have been sending information about virtual and telehealth home visits to their affiliates. We ask you to look to them for model specific information on telehealth in home visiting. OEC understands the critical importance of continued contact with the families you serve at this stressful time. As days in your home turn to weeks, families may feel an increasing sense of isolation and fear. Your work supporting them virtually through a phone call or telehealth is critical.

The following information and recommendations are offered to help you continue to stay in touch with families.

- Effective immediately, the HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) will exercise discretion and waive penalties for HIPAA violations against providers that serve patients in good faith through everyday communications technologies, such as FaceTime, Skype, during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. For more information: <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/emergency-preparedness/index.htm>

- Providers that seek additional privacy protections for telehealth while using video communication products can provide such services through the following technology vendors. Please note: many of these products are subscription-based.
 - Skype for Business
 - Updox
 - VSee
 - Zoom for Healthcare
 - Doxy.me
 - Google G Suite Hangouts Meet
- **Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok**, and similar video communication applications are public facing, and **should not be used** in the provision of telehealth by covered providers.
- Please ask families for permission to use this form of communication either through a verbal or written consent. Please also be aware that some communication technologies use significantly more data than a phone call. Phone calls are perfectly acceptable and may be the preferred form of communication for some families. Please ask them what form of communication they would prefer.
- Your presence and support during this time can serve as a critical lifeline to families. Weekly contact or more depending on a family's preference and need is considered optimal. Your program liaisons will continue to reach out to you on how to document telehealth visits in ECIS.

Thank you for your continued efforts to protect the health and safety of Connecticut's children.