



# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH SERVICES

P-02654 (04/2020)

## Birth to 3 Program Family Communication

---

### **Important information for children and families about COVID-19**

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) understands the uncertainty families are experiencing during the COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) pandemic. Although this can be a difficult time, DHS is committed to helping families keep life as normal as possible, while keeping their families safe and protected.

Support and services for children and families are still a priority for the Birth to 3 Program during this public health pandemic. Many services are now able to be provided over the phone or online to reduce the risk and prevent the spread of COVID-19 to children and families, Birth to 3 Program staff, and service providers. Families, service coordinators, and service providers will work together to determine the best way to continue current early intervention services.

### **Face-to-face contacts suspended**

Due to COVID-19, the Birth to 3 Program has suspended in-person contacts with families. The Birth to 3 Program has also increased the number of services that can be provided by phone or video conferencing to allow services to continue.

The suspension of in-person contacts for the Birth to 3 Program includes any contacts made in the home for the program such as:

- Any contacts required to determine a child's eligibility for the program
- Any contacts required to complete a child's evaluation for the program or service
- Any contacts required to develop a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Service coordination (monthly contacts), which includes any regular contact families may have with a service coordinator
- Ongoing service delivery

As mentioned above, these activities can occur by phone or technology.

If a family believes it is necessary for a child to receive in-person services during the pandemic, they should contact the service coordinator. The family should lead the conversation to share with the service coordinator or team the needed service(s), review options for service delivery, and talk about the risks with each option.

We will continue to evaluate the suspension of in-person contacts throughout this public health crisis.

### **How families can stay connected**

Families and service coordinators will work together to find ways to connect during this time and determine the types of contact that work best for the family. For example, in-person contacts with the service coordinator may be replaced by phone or online contact.

To help support children and families, service coordinators will be expected to make frequent and regular contact with all families during this pandemic. Families and service coordinators should work together to make a plan to stay connected that works best for the family. Families are encouraged to regularly stay in touch with the service coordinator and talk with them about their family and child's health and safety needs.

### **Supports and services now available remotely for families**

Families, service providers, and service coordinators will work together to find the best ways to maintain services during this time and determine the types of contact that works best for the family. The Birth to 3 Program offers flexibility for services that were previously provided face-to-face to now be provided through technology to continue to support children and families. Connecting with the service coordinator and IFSP team will provide the opportunity for families to talk about current needs, any new issues or challenges, as well as what services will look like during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Families choose how changes are made**

Although families are experiencing changes in many areas, they continue to make decisions about what is best for the child and family. Some supports that are usually in place for families may have changed, so families should talk to service coordinators about any new issues or challenges, update goals, or identify new strategies to meet outcomes. These changes may mean that some services are delivered over the phone, video conferencing, or other temporary methods to meet the child's needs.

Families will work together with the service coordinator and IFSP team to decide when and how supports and services may or will change for the family. Families can share concerns, ask questions about what devices and technology could be used to provide services, discuss the family's comfort level about using technology, and discuss the benefits and impacts of remote services in order to determine what is best for the family and child.

### **Connecting essential workforce families to child care**

Providing child care to the essential workforce is critical to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Wisconsin. Child care centers across the state are staying open to support [essential workforce](#) families, such as those working in health care, grocery stores, and other critical jobs, who are still reporting to work during the pandemic. To find local, safe child care, use the Department of Children and Families' (DCF's) new tools to:

- View the [new child care map](#) to see which child care providers are available across the state.
- Submit a [request for care](#) through DCF's updated Child Care Finder.
- See DCF's list of [tips for parents](#) using child care during COVID-19.

### **Protecting families from fraud**

Families need to be aware of potential COVID-19 scams during this pandemic. If a family is offered COVID-19 testing or treatment through telemarketing calls, social media, or door-to-door visits, ignore them. These services, or any requests that ask for personal information, are false. If a family receives a phone call asking for personal information and is unsure who they are talking to, they should hang up and can call the service coordinator for assistance.

### **Helpful COVID-19 resources for families**

If you have questions or need help, talk with the service coordinator for assistance.

### **General COVID-19 information**

Visit the following links for updates and current information about COVID-19:

- [How to stay healthy, and what to do when you're sick](#)
- [DHS program updates on COVID-19](#)

### **Supporting families through COVID-19**

These useful links can help families cope with the situation surrounding COVID-19:

- [COVID-19 fact sheet](#)
- [Resilient Wisconsin](#)
- [You are safer at home](#)
- [Talking to young children about COVID-19](#)

### **Supports for caregivers of young children**

- [Connect with other parents in Wisconsin with similar experiences](#)
- [The importance of self-care for caregivers](#)

### **Resources for families with young children**

- [Parenting young children during a pandemic](#)
- [Activities for young children at home](#)
- [Mindfulness toolkit for early childhood](#)