



IN-PERSON FAMILY TIME DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Guidance For Parents, Foster/Kinship Parents, CCO Caregivers, CFS Staff, & FSD Staff

When family time will be happening in person, it is important to follow this guidance to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19. It was developed based on current recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [Vermont Department of Health \(VDH\)](#).

No one should attend in-person family time if they:

- Tested positive or were clinically diagnosed positive for COVID-19,
- Were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or
- Are displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

Tips for In-Person Family Time

See VDH's guidance on [safely connecting with friends and family](#).

Physical distancing recommendations do not apply to parents, their children, or siblings. We understand siblings will want to have contact with each other and parents and caregivers will need to comfort children and show them they are loved. Parents, children, and siblings can hug, snuggle, kiss, and be in close contact with each other for the duration of family time.

Other participants in family time (coaches, FSWs, and other supportive adults) should do their best to practice physical distancing guidelines during family time.

All participants **should** wear cloth face coverings during in-person family time. *This excludes children under the age of 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, and anyone who cannot remove the covering without assistance.* Young children may resist wearing a mask, cry, yell, or pull them off because of fear or discomfort. It's important to recognize this might happen. We encourage people to use their best judgement. Family time will not be canceled because a child will not wear a mask.

The use of surgical masks and N-95 respirators is not recommended. See this document on [how to use & make cloth face coverings](#). The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings when it's difficult to stay physically distant (*i.e., at a grocery store or on a crowded sidewalk or bike path*), especially in communities where there is significant community transmission. You should wear them inside vehicles when dropping off/picking up children **and when having contact with people who live outside of your home.**

To avoid the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands before putting your face mask on.
- Be sure your mouth and nose are covered.
- Hook loops around your ears or tie it snugly.
- Don't touch the mask or pull it down while in public.
- Keep your mask on until you get home.
- Remove it without touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Wash your hands immediately.
- Wash the mask and make sure it's completely dry before using it again.
- Have a few masks on hand so you can rotate for washing.

Considerations for High Risk Individuals

The CDC and VDH consider the following people at [higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19](#):

- People 65 years of age and older
- People of any age with serious underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
 - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - Serious heart conditions
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic kidney disease or liver disease
 - Underlying immune disorders (*e.g., Rheumatoid Arthritis, Crohns Disease, recent cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, HIV or AIDS*)
- People who are immunocompromised or taking immune weakening medications
- People with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher

If you are high risk, be thoughtful about the risks to your health. Ultimately, the decision to participate in-person is yours to make.

Staying Home If Anyone Is Sick

It is FSD's standard practice to cancel or reschedule family time if the child is sick, the parent is sick, or the caregiver is sick (or another child in the home requiring care is sick). This remains true now.

During the COVID-19 pandemic:

- All adults who will be at family time should monitor themselves and stay home if they are sick.
- Caregivers should monitor the children and keep them home if they are sick.
- NO ONE should participate if they have any of these symptoms: cough, fever (100.4°F or higher) shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
- If anyone display symptoms of illness during family time, it should end immediately, and everyone should go home.

If anyone in your home displays any of the symptoms listed above, call your health care provider. Ask if you should be tested for COVID-19. If you don't have a provider, dial 2-1-1 to find one in your area.

If anyone is diagnosed with COVID-19 or waiting for test results, they should self-isolate until:

1. Three full days have passed with no fever AND no use of fever-reducing medication,
2. Other symptoms have improved, and
3. At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

See the CDC's guidance on [what to do if you are sick](#) and [caring for someone sick at home](#).

Notifying FSD If Anyone Is Sick

You should inform the assigned Family Services Worker if anyone is sick and family time is being cancelled or rescheduled. You should request a virtual shared parenting meeting if:

- You anticipate there could be disagreement,
- You need support discussing the family time schedule, or
- A facilitated conversation would be helpful for any of the participants.

Close Contact¹ with COVID-19 Positive Individuals

The CDC and VDH recommend making a list of people you've been in close contact with each day. If you do get sick, this will make it easier to get in touch with those people so they can take proper precautions to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

If anyone has been in close contact to someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, they should self-quarantine for 14 days. This means staying at home and watching for symptoms. You may get tested during your quarantine period if you never had any symptoms. Call your provider to arrange for testing on or after day 7. Stay in quarantine until you get your results. If the results are negative, and you still don't have any symptoms, you can end your quarantine.

- Day 0 is the day they were last in contact with the infected person.
- Watch for these symptoms even if they are mild: cough, fever (100.4°F or higher), shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell.
- Don't leave home, except to get medical care.
- Call ahead before visiting a health care provider or emergency department.
- If possible, stay in a specific room in the home and use a separate bathroom.
- Stay at least six feet away from others in the home at all times. Don't share household items.

1. According to VDH, *close contact* means being within 6 feet (for a long time) of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 while they were infectious. That means two days before symptoms began, until they are recovered. See [what to do if you're a close contact of someone with COVID-19](#).

Supplies Needed for In-Person Family Time

For the safety of everyone, the following items need to be accessible in advance and used during family time:

- Disinfecting wipes and/or other disinfecting cleaning products
- Soap and running water or hand sanitizer
- Cloth face coverings or disposable masks for all participants to wear
- Gloves (medical grade nitril or latex) – *only used if taking someone else's temperature*
- Thermometer and disposable probe covers for shared thermometers

We hope you have access to these items. If you need supplies, call your district office's main line to let them know what supplies you need. We'll make every effort to get you these supplies before in-person contact takes place.

Plan Ahead

Plan for in-person family time happening in the coming weeks and months. Let us know if you:

- Need supplies,
- Have questions, or
- There is not cooperation from all participants to do what's necessary to keep everyone safe. Anyone can notify us if someone is not following required health and safety recommendations.

FSD District Office Phone Numbers		
Barre – (802) 479-4260	Hartford – (802) 295-8840	Rutland – (802) 786-5817
Bennington – (802) 442-8138	Middlebury – (802) 388-4660	Springfield – (802) 289-0648
Brattleboro – (802) 257-2888	Morrisville – (802) 888-4576	St. Albans – (802) 527-7741
Burlington – (802) 863-7370	Newport – (802) 334-6723	St. Johnsbury – (802) 748-8374

Car Seats

- When transporting several children in one day, lightly spritz the car seat with disinfectant spray between transports. You may also consider using towels or disposable covers.
- When possible, car seats should be washed according to the car seat owner's manual. Review the manual for how to correctly wash and dry your specific car seat and its various components.
 - For instructions on how to safely clean COVID-19 from your child's car seat go to: <https://www.consumerreports.org/car-seats/how-to-safely-clean-coronavirus-from-your-childs-car-seat/>

Safely Transporting Children To/From Family Time

- Anyone who is self-quarantining due to close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual, or self-isolating because they are sick, SHOULD NOT provide transportation to family time.
- If possible, the same person should transport the child for each family time.
- **Generally, people should not transport children from multiple households in the same vehicle at the same time. However, siblings who are attending family time together and will be in close contact with each other may be transported in the same vehicle if the person driving is agreeable.**
- **Unless everyone in the vehicle resides in the same household,** cloth face coverings should be worn during transportation (excluding the exceptions outlined earlier).
- Children should be seated in the back seat.
- If the weather allows, windows should be opened slightly to support air flow.
- The person providing transportation should bring the child to the agreed upon meeting area. No one outside of the vehicle should touch the door handles, car seats, or vehicle's interior.
- Frequently touched surfaces of the vehicle should be wiped down with disinfectant between transportation and after travel.

Screening In-Person Family Time Participants

- Each person should self-screen before they leave for family time. Ask yourself:
 - Have I been in close contact with anyone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
 - Have I experienced any of these symptoms in the last few days: cough, fever, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell?
 - Do I have a fever of 100.4° or higher? Take your temperature before you go.

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, you cannot attend in-person family time.
- If feasible, everyone's temperature should be taken again on site before family time begins.
- During in-person contact, continually:
 - Monitor everyone for symptoms of COVID-19 (see above).
 - Inspect children for signs of infection (e.g., flushed cheeks, fatigue, extreme fussiness).

Temperatures of 100.4° F and higher will result in the cancellation of family time. We recommend caution if an individual has a fever below the 100.4° F threshold. If a parent cancels because of a low-grade fever, we'll honor their request to be cautious and protective.

Hand Washing

Individuals must frequently wash their hands with soap & water for at least 20 seconds, especially:

- When first arriving at the location where parent/child contact is occurring
- Before and after taking someone's temperature
- After going to the bathroom, helping a child use the bathroom, or diapering
- Before and after preparing food, snacks, or drinks
- Before and after eating food, handling food, or feeding children
- After playing outdoors
- After blowing one's nose or helping a child blow their nose
- After coming in contact with any bodily fluid
- Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
- After handling garbage and cleaning up
- When visibly dirty
- **After family time, and after handling or washing any contaminated clothing or items**

Adults should help young children do the same. After helping children with handwashing, adults should also wash their hands.

If soap and water are not readily available, closely supervise the children's use of a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of their hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

Also, remember to:

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes with the inside of your elbow or a tissue.**

Family Time Logistics, Location, & Activities

As stated previously, physical distancing recommendations do not apply to parents, their children, or siblings. Other participants in family time (coaches, FSWs, and other supportive adults) should do their best to practice physical distancing guidelines during family time.

When planning family time, think about:

- Having it outdoors if weather permits.
- **Whether the location has enough open space and can allow for physical distancing from community members and people who are not part of family time.**
- **Avoiding popular parks or spaces that typically attract a lot of people.**
- **Bringing hand sanitizer with you if soap and water are not readily available.**

- Age-appropriate activities that can be done outside:
 - Going for a walk **or run**
 - **Riding bikes**
 - **Dance parties**
 - **Playing in nature and building with twigs, leaves, cones, and rocks**
 - **Doing a nature scavenger hunt or group challenge**
 - **Playing soccer or kicking a ball back and forth**
 - **Water activities**
 - **Yard games**
 - Balloon games
 - Drawing with sidewalk chalk
 - Coloring **or painting**
 - Doing a puzzle or playing a game together

When washing, feeding, or holding infants and young children, adults can protect themselves by:

- Wearing an oversized, button-down, long sleeved shirt.
- Wearing long hair up off the collar in a ponytail or other updo.
- Washing their hands, neck, and other places touched by a child’s secretions.
- Changing the child’s clothes if secretions (e.g., drool) are on the child’s clothes.
- Changing the adult’s top if there are secretions on it and washing their hands again.
- Placing contaminated items in a plastic bag or immediately washing them in a washing machine.

Cleaning Spaces Used for Family Time

Thoroughly clean, sanitize, and disinfect any space used for, and objects used during, family time. This should be done every day or following each use. This includes:

- All surfaces – especially where children eat
- Materials, toys, and furniture that have been touched
- Bathrooms, **faucet handles, and counters**
- Doorknobs or handles, handrails, **and other high-touch surfaces**
- Frequently-used equipment, including electronic devices
- Any items children placed in their mouths or hands

Limit shared materials to those you can easily clean, sanitize, or disinfect. Use the warmest water setting and dry the items completely. Toys that cannot be cleaned, sanitized, or washed immediately after family time should not be used at this time. Children’s books and other paper-based materials are not considered high risk for transmission.

Transfers Between Locations

When a child is transferred between locations (i.e., childcare, family time, or between households), the CDC recommends the following:

- Everyone washing or sanitizing their hands
- Transferring the child's items in a disposable bag
- Weather and temperature allowing, having the child wear long-sleeve clothing
- Changing the child's clothing after family time
- Placing contaminated items and clothing in a plastic bag or immediately washing them in a washing machine

References for this Document

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/care-for-someone.html>

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH:

- <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19>
- <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID-19-VDH-mask-guidance.pdf>
- https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID-19_What-to-do-if-you-are-a-close-contact-of-someone-with-COVID-19_final.pdf
- https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/Safely_Connect_with_Friends_and_Family_FINAL.pdf
- https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/COVID-19-chart-observation-isolation-quarantine_final.pdf

CONSUMER REPORTS:

- <https://www.consumerreports.org/car-seats/how-to-safely-clean-coronavirus-from-your-childs-car-seat/>