

# Family Guide for Considerations of In-Home, (In-Person) Early Intervention (EI) Services During COVID-19



Tele intervention can continue to be used as a safe and effective service delivery strategy when it best meets the needs for children and their families.

Families may request to resume their in home (in person) services but still must abide by the universal mask order and screening protocols.

The IFSP/IEP team should problem solve how to support the request.

Local EI program leaders have been directed to remove any decision making procedures, beyond screening and abiding by the universal mask order, that would prevent families from receiving in person service delivery. Everyone should continue to practice appropriate public health measures to slow the spread of COVID 19 such as masking, physical distancing, and hand hygiene.

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# Where to Start the Conversation

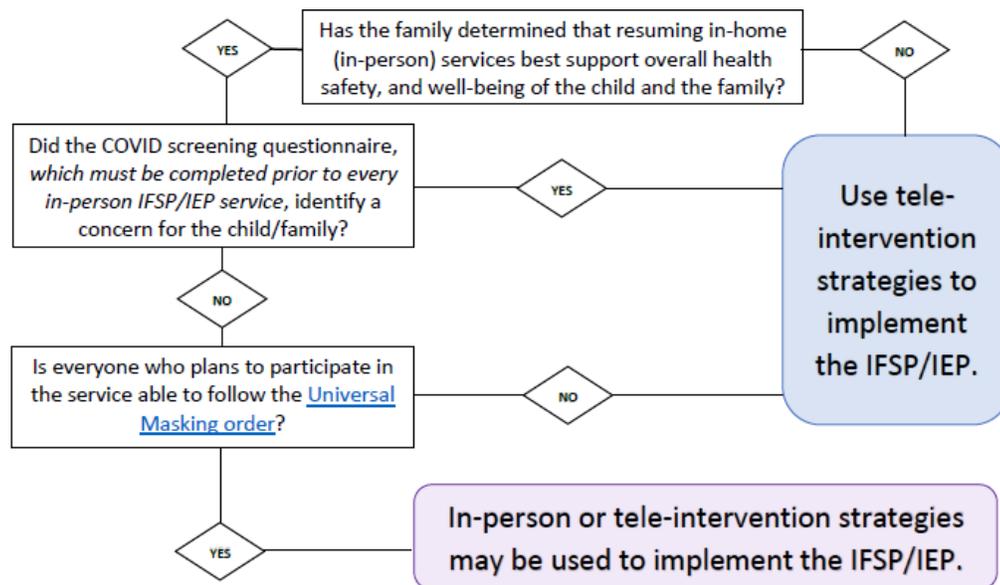
The Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) recognizes that families need to understand and navigate a lot of information. For example:

- The status of COVID 19 in Pennsylvania and your community.
- The guidance that BEISFS is providing to EI program leaders and EI providers.
- Where to go for information related to COVID 19 and guidance.
- You may also wish to consider what your comfort level is, as well as the potential risks and benefits of in person services for your child and family.



*Look for this icon for additional resources. Resources are located at the end of this document.*

## Step 1: Know about COVID-19 in your Community and Guidance to EI Programs.



Guidance developed by the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Support (3/1/21)

- Your family may find that resuming in home (in person) service(s) is the best choice to support overall health, safety, and well being of the child and the family.
- Everyone should practice appropriate public health measures to slow the spread of COVID 19 such as masking, physical distancing, and hand hygiene. 
- Use the [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) to review transmission risk in your community.
- Use the guidance in the [Staying Safe while Providing/Receiving In-Home Services during COVID-19](#)
- Tele intervention can continue to be used as a safe and effective service delivery strategy when it best meets the needs for children and their families.

## Step 2: Know and Understand the Screening

Prior to **every in home/in person EI service visit**, families will be asked the following screening questions. The purpose is to identify your risk of transmitting COVID 19 and your risk of complications should you or a family member become infected.

Your provider will be assessing their risk of transmitting COVID 19 prior to asking you these screening questions.



1. Has anyone in the home tested positive or suspected of having COVID-19?
2. Does anyone in the home have signs or symptoms of a fever, new or worsening cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, respiratory illness?
3. Has anyone in the home had contact within the last 14 days with someone with or under investigation for COVID-19?
4. Will a person with a weakened immune system, a person who is over the age of 65 years, or a person that has chronic health conditions (e.g. heart disease, lung disease, diabetes), or other factors that pose a risk if the person becomes infected with COVID-19 be present during the visit?

If your EI provider is not able to contact you before the in-person visit and decides to proceed with the visit, the provider will ask these health screening questions prior to entering the home. The provider should stand approximately six feet from the doorway when asking these questions.



- If the EI Provider believes they are at risk of transmitting COVID-19 or the response is **yes** to any of the first three questions above, the provider of EI services will coordinate with you to schedule a tele-intervention session instead of an in-person session.
- If the response is yes to question #4 the provider of EI services and you will discuss the possible risk in delivering an in-person session and document the decision.

# Step 3: Considerations for Your Family

## Who is at Risk for COVID-19 & How it is Spread?

- People of any age, even healthy young adults and children, can get COVID-19.
- [People who are older](#) or have [certain underlying medical conditions](#) are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.
- [Other groups](#) may be at higher risk for getting COVID-19 or having more severe illness.
- You can become infected by coming into close contact (about six feet or two arm lengths) with a person who has COVID-19.
- COVID-19 is primarily spread from person to person.
- You can become infected from respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- You may also be able to get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then by touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.
- Authorized COVID-19 vaccines can help protect you from COVID-19.
- Other [prevention steps](#) help stop the spread of COVID-19, and these steps are still important, even as vaccines are being distributed.

### You may wish to consider these questions.

What questions do I have for my child's provider about how they will help to keep my family safe?

Will I be able to stay about 6 feet away from my provider? What about other family members who will be home? What about my child?

Will I be able to clean surfaces and objects that would be touched?

Who else does my family/child interact with that might be at a greater risk if they were to be exposed to COVID-19?

Do these considerations affect my comfort level? Is there anything that could make me feel more comfortable?



Providers, family members and children over 2 are required to wear a mask or cloth face covering during in-person EI services.

For more information about [PA DOH's Order on Universal Face Coverings](#), what type of masks comply with this order, and additional CDC guidance, go to the resource section. ★



**A note about vaccines:** Your family members vaccination status is protected health information and is not required to be shared to receive in-person EI services. As a family you may choose to take your family members vaccination status into account as you assess your risk.

Your EI provider(s) vaccination status is protected health information and will not be shared with you.

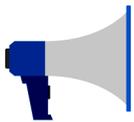
# Step 3 Continued: Considerations for Your Family

## Tele-intervention: What Have You Learned?

What has been successful and challenging regarding tele-intervention? Tele-intervention is the lowest risk service delivery method. As you consider what is/is not working, collaborate to determine if tele-intervention strategies, in-person, or a combination of both strategies are the best fit for you and your child. Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) and your local EI program are providing professional development to assist both providers and families to increase the effectiveness of tele-intervention as a strategy to implement IFSP/IEP services.

### You may wish to consider these questions.

- What priorities do I have for my child/family?
- What (if any) challenges have arisen with tele-intervention?
- Can these challenges be addressed through additional support for my family or for my EI professionals; or by discussing when and how tele-intervention strategies are delivered?
- What aspects of tele-intervention have been successful?
- What have I learned about my child and their EI services during this time?



Your EI team, that you are an integral part of, can individualize services to meet your child/ family's needs and comfort level. Services don't need to be implemented using 100% tele-intervention or 100% in-person strategies. **The key will be flexibility and communication.**



Consider talking with your child's/your family member(s) health care provider if you have specific concerns related to health conditions and/or risks associated with COVID-19 and resuming in-person EI services.

# Step 4: Once In-Person EI Services Begin

## Stay Informed



- Know what your EI providers are doing to implement CDC and PA DOH guidance.
- EI Preschool Programs must develop a health and safety plan, as outlined in the [PDE guidance](#). The plan must be approved by their local board/governing body and must be publicly posted, prior to any in-person service delivery.
- Ask questions and share any concerns with your Infant/Toddler Service Coordinator or EI Preschool Program.

## Remain Aware



- Continue to monitor your child and other family member's health.
- Keep up to date on guidance from Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH), Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) & the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## Stay Safe



- Wash hands (or use hand sanitizer) before the EI visit.
  - Clean surfaces (door handles, toys, shared household items, other hard surfaces) before and after the EI visit.
  - As much as is reasonable, maintain a six foot distance between your child/your family members participating in the visit and the EI provider.
  - Your family and EI provider will be required to wear a mask or face covering. Keep in mind, their mask helps to protect you, your family members, and child. Your mask helps to protect your EI provider.
- Children under the age of two should not wear a mask or cloth face covering.
  - You should be prepared to supply your own masks or cloth face coverings for your family members who participate in-person.
  - The risk of transmission of COVID-19 is lessened during outside activities. Consider if services outside are a safe and reasonable option for your child. If services will be provided indoors, ensure good ventilation.



Tele-intervention can continue and/or resume if your family has concerns related to health/safety, or if your EI team feels that tele-intervention is the most appropriate way to address your family/child priorities.



# Resources



## **Pennsylvania & Federal Guidance Regarding Masks**

[Pennsylvania Dept. of Health Universal Face Coverings](#)

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) Use Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread](#)

[Resources for Masks for Children](#)

## **Keeping Up to Date on COVID-19 in Your Community**

[Pennsylvania DOH COVID-19 Page](#)

[Pennsylvania DOH COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard](#)

## **Additional Resources to Help Keep Your Child & Family Safe**

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) How to Protect Yourself and Others](#)

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) Caring for Children](#)

[Cleaning Your Home](#)

[Improving Ventilation in Your Home](#)

## **PA Early Intervention & Early Childhood Resources**

[Early Intervention Technical Assistance Portal Resources to Support Families During COVID-19](#)

[Early Intervention Technical Assistance Portal Resources to Support EI Work During COVID-19](#)

[PA Promise for Children](#)

## **Talking to Children about COVID-19**

[PA Dept. of Education: Talking to Children about COVID-19](#)

[Sesame Street Talking to Children About COVID-19](#)



If you have questions or concerns about your child's EI services, contact your Service Coordinator or EI Preschool Program as a first step. They can assist you to understand and navigate this information and help to address your questions and concerns.

If you have difficulty in reaching your Service Coordinator/EI Preschool Program, email the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and Family Supports (BEISFS) and they will assist you: [RA-ocdintervention@pa.gov](mailto:RA-ocdintervention@pa.gov)

