

NUMBER
#20-68-11C

DATE
April 28, 2020

OF INTEREST TO
County Directors

Social Services Supervisors and
Staff

Tribal Social Services
Supervisors and Staff

County Attorneys
Tribal Attorneys

ACTION/DUE DATE
Please read information and
implement modified policy

EXPIRATION DATE
April 28, 2022

Corrected #20-68-11: Monthly Caseworker Visits Modified to Permit Videoconferencing

TOPIC

Policy modification to required monthly caseworker visits to ensure foster children's well-being and help stop the spread of COVID-19.

PURPOSE

Provide information on modified monthly face-to-face caseworker visits to permit videoconferencing or any similar technology.

CONTACT

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SIGNED

NIKKI FARAGO
Assistance Commissioner
Children and Family Services

TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

I. Background

As Minnesota experiences the COVID-19 pandemic, we are reviewing opportunities to modify policy and practice to align with measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 through social distancing and quarantine.

Monthly caseworker visits are required with children in foster care, and existing policy requires face-to-face visits and prohibited using videoconferencing according to the [Social Security Act, section 422\(b\)\(17\)](#) and [Child Welfare Policy Manual \(CWPM\), §7.3, #8](#).

To meet the federal requirements, [Minnesota Statutes, section 260C.212, subdivisions 2, 4a](#), requires that every child in foster care or co-located with a parent shall be visited face-to-face by a child's caseworker or another person who has responsibility for managing a child's placement on a monthly basis, with the majority of visits occurring in child's residence.

II. Modified policy

On March 18, 2020, a federal reconsideration of policies was issued to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and address the current public health challenges. Governor Tim Waltz signed Emergency Executive Order [20-12](#) on March 20, 2020, permitting the commissioner to temporarily waive or modify state statute. In response to the federal authorization and state statutory waiver, the commissioner approved a waiver to modify the requirement of monthly face-to-face contacts ([260C.212, subd. 4a](#)) by the responsible social services agency ([260C.007, subd.27a](#)) to permit use of videoconferencing or any similar technology between a child and their foster care caseworker. The waiver of state statute aligns with federal guidance issued.

The monthly caseworker visit requirement remains in place and agencies must continue to comply with the requirement. Videoconferencing offers a safe alternative for everyone conducting monthly caseworker visits during these current extraordinary circumstances. The videoconference must continue to assess the child's safety, needs and well-being at each visit. We encourage agencies to consider alternative plans of action if a caseworker is not able to reach a child via videoconference, or if the videoconference raises a concern about the child's safety or well-being.

III. Instructions for documenting in SSIS

A. Revised instructions for documentation

On April 2, 2020, the department issued [Bulletin 20-69-02](#) announcing changes for face-to-face contact requirements for claiming targeted case management, including Child Welfare – Targeted Case Management (CW – TCM) and Children's Mental Health – Targeted Case Management (CMH – TCM).

Claiming TCM for telephone and video-conferencing contacts is now allowable, retroactive to March 1, 2020.

The federal and state regulations that require monthly caseworker visits with children in out-of-home placement are separate from those related to Targeted Case Management. While a telephone contact with a child in out-of-home placement is temporarily allowable as a claim for TCM, telephone contact **does not** meet the requirement for monthly caseworker visits with children in out-of-home placement. The only type of contacts that meet this requirement are face-to-face and, temporarily during the pandemic, video-conferencing contacts.

Following are revised instructions for documenting when a video-conference contact is completed with a child in out-of-home placement in lieu of a face-to-face contact due to work conditions related to COVID-19. Documenting in this manner will demonstrate meeting the requirement for monthly visits with children in out-of-home placement, and generate a TCM claim for eligible children.

In the:

- **“County Sub-service”** field, select “87-COVID 19, Related”
- **“Activity”** field, select “Client contact” or “collateral contact” (as appropriate)
- **“Method”** field, select “Face-to-face”
- **“Location”** field, select the location where the child was when contact was made (e.g. residence)
- **“Note”** section, document that contact was made via video-conference in lieu of face-to-face due to Covid-19.

If caseworkers documented video-conferences with children in out-of-home placement as telephone contacts in accordance with instructions provided earlier, follow the instructions below for adjusting documentation to ensure a TCM claim is generated for eligible children:

- Retroactively review monthly time records to identify contacts that were made through videoconferencing. If the sub-service code “87 – COVID Related” was used when documenting those time records, they can be easily found in the General Report: Time Activity Report
- Change the method of contact to “Face-to-Face.”

See the SSIS screen shot below for an example of correct documentation.

Activity

Workgroup: Caseload

Program: ^{a/*} No. of Persons:

Service:

County sub-service:

Activity:

Duration: Hr. Min.

Cnty Acctg:

Regarding:

Allocate Time

Note:

E NOTE: Videoconference in lieu of Face to Face due to COVID-19.

Contact:

Purpose:

Status: Completed Attempted

Method:

Location:

Contact With: Add

IV. Resources

For more information and resources the following are available to help stay informed:

- [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention](#) webpage
- [Minnesota Department of Human Services](#) webpage (you can sign up for email notifications)
- [Minnesota Department of Health](#) webpage
- [BeReadyMN](#) webpage
- [Office of the Administration for Children & Families Children’s Bureau](#) webpage

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4670 (voice) by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency’s ADA coordinator.