



Illinois Department of Human Services

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To: All Early Intervention Stakeholders

From: Heather Hofferkamp, Interim Bureau Chief <sup>HMA</sup>  
Bureau of Early Intervention

Date: March 1, 2022

Re: Early Intervention (EI) Stakeholder Update

Early Intervention (EI) in Illinois, has taken every precaution to keep children, families, and providers safe during the pandemic. As Illinois recovers from the pandemic and more families are allowing services to occur in person, we are encouraging everyone continue with the [Family Risk Screening Checklist](#) designed to protect our vulnerable population currently not eligible for vaccines. EI services scheduled on or after February 28, 2022, will operate under the updated guidance as follows: Live Video Visits (LVV) (telehealth and telephonic service delivery) are a viable, evidence-based, and effective option. This option shall be used to continue to support the education and coaching philosophy of EI services and to mitigate risk of exposure to infectious disease. LVV should be in accordance with professional judgement and consider the needs of the family.

All in person encounters should be performed in rooms that promote social distancing between individuals. In-person sessions with masking are recommended and can be incorporated with LVV to mitigate the risk of exposure to infectious disease for families and providers.

In-person session parameters:

- An in-person session must be the result of a discussion based on the comfort level of the family and the provider, which takes the individual risk factors of the child/family and provider into consideration. If anyone is not comfortable with moving to in-person services and the child is benefitting from LVV, then services can remain virtual.
- In-Person sessions may be incorporated with LVV sessions for a hybrid service delivery approach that consider the needs of the family.
- In-person sessions do not have restrictions on the number of participants. However, ALL participants must pass the screening protocols and we encourage participants to wear masks for the benefit of everyone present. EI Program staff and providers should continue to be mindful that smaller groups support risk mitigation measures to limit exposure. Limit unnecessary external materials and equipment for a visit to reduce transmission of germs. Providers should not bring in toy bags, bubbles, and balloons.
- Encouraging families to meet in a designated space in the home where surface areas can easily be disinfected and that allows for appropriate distancing is preferable. Meeting outdoors (weather and environment permitting) is also a viable option.

- Contact should remain as brief as needed for hands-on demonstrations (model cues, positioning, feeding techniques, etc.). Use coaching practices with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to provide guidance to carry out strategies.

#### Community Setting Service Delivery

- Guidance permits for a safe re-entry into community settings such as childcare, library, in person playgroup, transition plans on school grounds, etc. Under the current EI re-entry guidance, risk mitigation and controlled environments must factor in the community setting risk mitigation measures, as well as EI re-entry protocols. Providers and families meeting in community settings must determine and follow the highest level of protections, whether those are imposed by the community setting or EI guidance.

#### Community Setting Parameters:

- A community setting visit must be the result of a discussion based on the comfort level of the family, provider, assessment of the child and families progress and individual risk factors of the child/family.
- Include communication with the community setting to understand and abide by their protocols, share EI protocols, and establishing parameters to support a designated space in the setting where surface areas can easily be disinfected and that allows for appropriate distancing or use of outdoors (weather and environment permitting).
- Include communication with each family about the required visit protocols in both the community setting and EI.
- Limit external materials and equipment for the visit to reduce transmission of germs. Playgroups should consider new/unused and pre-packaged materials (playdough, individual sensory bags, etc.) that are distributed to each child and not shared. Bubbles and balloons are strictly prohibited. Any materials should be discarded or given to the family to take home and are prohibited from being re-used.