



Overview

Virtual service delivery has become an accepted and effective modality for home visits. After careful study to ensure fidelity of implementation, some home visiting models have successfully integrated virtual service delivery over the last handful of years. The home visiting field recognizes and values the benefits of virtual service delivery to families:

- ✔ Improved equity through family choice, convenience, and accessibility
- ✔ Increased access in areas where vulnerable populations often lack an entrance point to quality maternal, infant, and early childhood programs, including rural and frontier areas
- ✔ Prevention of service delivery disruptions due to family illness or inclement weather
- ✔ Immediacy and flexibility between families and home visitors

Virtual Home Visiting and COVID-19

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated virtual home visiting; all programs quickly adopted a virtual modality, preventing a disruption in services to families.

- ✔ **Practitioner Competence** Providers received training on technology, virtual recruitment, enrollment, screenings, consent, and confidentiality, e-documentation, observation of parent-child interactions, conducting staff supervision, and more
- ✔ **Communities of Practice** States and models created new rapid response communities of practice for home visitors and administrators
- ✔ **Model Developers** supported states and providers by adapting home visitor education processes to provide training virtually, and to include virtual home visiting best practices

“I actually think this experience will help us grow to become even more family-centered by having an option whose potential we didn’t fully realize until now.” -home visitor

What Home Visitors are Saying

“Families have been so receptive to a change in service and so grateful for the relationships that they have formed.”

“I’ve sadly witnessed families tell me their therapy and support groups have closed... but home visiting is still continuing to support our families.”

“These visits allow for more access for families, and more flexibility for our workforce. I actually think this experience will help us grow to become even more client-centered, by having an option whose potential we didn’t fully realize until now.”



What Families are Saying

“I’m very grateful to the program, because despite the difficult situation we’re all going through, they have found a way to continue helping us and giving us the support we need.”

“They helped me have more patience being a parent and with all the hospital visits. They gave me information about my daughter’s development and worked with us on things like communication.”

“The parenting class helped me learn what to look for and how to work through problems with her.”

“Without the help... I don’t know that I would have been able to have my son or understand what it takes to raise a kid.”

Considerations for better supporting virtual home visiting:

- Access to devices and connectivity for families *and* home visitors
- Ensuring privacy for screenings for intimate partner violence and related conversations
- Enrollment for the families hardest to reach online
- Continuous quality improvement, ongoing training, and technology maintenance to provide high quality services

One early COVID-19 study of over 1,300 home visiting programs found that over half the families did not have access to the internet or a device to have a virtual visit. Even with relief funds, a virtual service delivery modality option will require resources for technology.

What’s Next for Virtual Home Visiting?

The trajectory of change over the course of the pandemic has been to ease restrictions and remove barriers to the provision of services. The shift to virtual home visiting represents a significant modality change that families and providers have enthusiastically adopted as an option for service delivery.

Providing families the option to choose the service delivery method that best meets their needs enhances family voice and choice, and being able to offer virtual home visiting removes barriers to make home visiting more accessible regardless of geographic distance, health, and family preference. Looking ahead, the home visiting field acknowledges that some programmatic innovations that emerged during the pandemic are likely to stay after the COVID-19 pandemic ends, including virtual home visiting.