

# Updated Guidance: Early Intervention

March 19, 2020

The Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) has received additional questions related to coronavirus (COVID-19) and the state of emergency.

In addition to the Early Intervention (EI) [guidelines released March 12](#) and the frequently asked questions and answers [released March 13](#), please review the following questions.

You can continue to access all DODD guidance and resources related to COVID-19 on the department's dedicated [web page](#). Please contact your county's EI program consultant if you have additional questions. DODD will continue to respond and provide updates to the EI system for commonly asked questions.

## **What are we supposed to do about evaluations that are scheduled? Do we have to continue to provide evaluations in-person?**

- DODD encourages EI staff to take appropriate and reasonable actions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, even if this results in noncompliance with an EI timeline because an evaluation is completed late due to a suspension of face-to-face visits. In the coming days, DODD will provide guidance about how to complete the evaluation process in its entirety using technology.

## **Can the annual assessment be completed with the Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) and be conducted virtually?**

- EI teams can use assessment tools like the HELP that can be administered entirely via technology for annual or initial child assessments.

## **Are there any other specific recommendations or things you are hearing from other counties, as far as virtual visits, that are working or not working? Our agency is cancelling evaluations on a week-by-week basis and will be using system noncompliance reason (NCRs) as a reason for noncompliance.**

- EI program consultants are reaching out to counties to learn more about how counties are using technology. We will share what we know as we compile the information. On March 16, DODD added a specific system noncompliance reason (NCR) in the EI Data System (EIDS) for system NCRs related to COVID-19. Please use this NCR anytime that you have a system

reason for noncompliance due to the pandemic (for example, agency suspends face-to-face visits, staff are out sick or quarantined due to COVID-19, etc.). Your documentation should reflect that the NCR is related to the pandemic.

**Do we need to conduct an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) review to change the EI service location from “community” to a different location as soon as the families agree to the change?**

- No. For the duration of the state of emergency, you can change the location of an EI service by providing prior written notice and updating the IFSP at the next naturally occurring IFSP review. Ensure all conversations with the family are well documented.

**How can the EI team change a family’s primary service provider (PSP) when the family agrees with the proposed change, and the proposed change includes changing EI services?**

- To change a PSP (EI service), follow the process for updating the IFSP grid, (ending the previous EI service and adding the new EI service), providing prior written notice (PWN), and holding an IFSP review. During the state of emergency, all IFSP meetings can be completed via technology. Ensure all conversations with the family and providers are well documented.

**Is there a list of assessments that are approved? Do we need two licensed people? Can the PSP write an observation for the yearly assessment?**

- We do not have a list of approved assessment tools. A tool is not required for child assessment; observation can be used. Regardless of the tool or method for assessment, at least two licensed/certified disciplines (not necessarily two people) must conduct the child assessment.

**If a family chooses to cancel all visits, can they remain active or do we exit them?**

- Please determine if the family wishes to exit EI or simply wants to take a pause in receiving EI services due to the state of emergency. If the family wants to take a pause, do not exit the family. Document all conversations with the family.

**I know we are permitted to do virtual visits using audio-only, but are they billable under Title XX as typical face-to-face intervention would be?**

- Yes. During the state of emergency, EI services via audio-only are billable under Title XX.

**Is this an acceptable way to obtain signatures when completing the IFSP via technology: Service coordinator (SC) signs Section 5 and sends to parent to sign. SC then gets electronic signatures for all providers.**

- That is one way to approach the signatures. Electronic signatures from the parent are also acceptable.

**Are there any electronic signature programs you suggest?**

- We do not have a particular electronic signature program we recommend. We encourage you to reach out to your agency's IT department if you have technical questions.

**Do you have specific guidance about personal protective equipment (PPE) for in-home visits?**

- DODD does not have any EI-specific guidance around PPE but does have [general guidance](#). Please continue to refer to information from DODD, your local health department, and the Ohio Department of Health for guidance. DODD has a [web page](#) dedicated to COVID-19 resources and guidance.

For specific questions about COVID-19 and additional information and resources, DODD urges you to use the Ohio Department of Health's call center. Call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634), or visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov).