

# Parenting Through the Pandemic

Strategies to stay both safe and  
connected

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Sarah Springer, MD, FAAP  
Chair, Council on Foster Care Adoption and  
Kinship Care

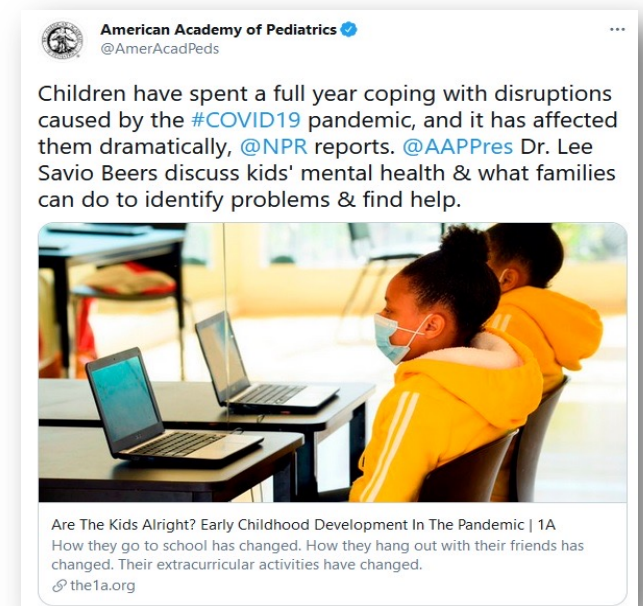
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## OVERVIEW

- Stresses caused by the pandemic have placed unique burdens on families who provide foster care
- Will review strategies to help everyone stay safe *and* connected
  - Safe, enjoyable, and productive visits – in-person and virtually
  - Safe transitions
  - COVID vaccines
- Recognize that we are still learning about this virus, and “best practices” will continue to change
- Updated [AAP Interim Guidance](#) & [HealthyChildren.org](#)



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# CHILD WELFARE SERVICES ARE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- Safety, permanency, & well-being
- Children's needs do not stop because of a pandemic
- Treatment, visits, and permanency planning must continue, adhering to established timelines, in order to promote the optimal development, attachment, and well-being of children and youth
- Necessity is the mother of invention – the pandemic provides opportunities for innovation!



# CHILD WELFARE SERVICES ARE ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- Child welfare professionals must continue to connect in-person with children and families under their care, but how can this be done safely?
  - Masks for all persons involved
  - Limit time indoors
    - Keep windows open when possible
    - See what you need to see, and then move conversations outdoors
  - After-visit care
    - Wash hands!
    - Change clothes if they may have been soiled



# THE VALUE OF FACE MASKS



- Together with vaccines and handwashing, they are the most important thing we can do to keep everybody safe & healthy
- Masks must have at least 2 layers of tightly woven fabric, should fit snugly over your nose, mouth, and chin, and flat against your cheeks
  - No valves – they defeat the purpose by letting in respiratory droplets
- Know how to put on and remove a mask without contaminating your hands or other surfaces
- Learn more from the [CDC](#)



## FAMILY VISITS



- Critically important to maintaining attachment and allowing healthy, stable reunifications
- Can also create added stress when visit participants are keeping different levels of pandemic safety precautions
- Additional planning needed to keep everybody safe while still maintaining critical connections between children and their birth parents
- Will need to agree on some basic ground rules in order to reduce stress and keep everyone safe and healthy



# FAMILY VISITS

## Screening for Exposure Risks

- Pre-visit screening – no more than 24 hours before the visit - asked of all visit participants:
- Any fever, cough, cold symptoms, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell?
- Any known exposure to COVID-19?
- Are you or anybody in your household COVID + or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test?
- Are you fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?
- Those at highest risk for severe illness from COVID-19 may need to avoid in-person visits if their safety can't be assured



# FAMILY VISITS

## Vaccinated & Un-vaccinated Participants

- “Fully vaccinate” means the person has completed all required doses of a vaccine at least 14 days ago
- Currently no vaccine available for children under 16 years old
  - This too will change over time
- Safety precautions, including masks, should continue to be used until all visit participants have been vaccinated



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# FAMILY VISITS

## Vaccinated & Un-vaccinated Participants

- When *all* participants in a visit are fully vaccinated, then visits can loosen precautions, in accordance with [CDC guidelines](#)



# FAMILY VISITS

## Logistics & Space

- Location
  - Outdoors is preferable, whenever feasible
  - When outdoors is not an option, then large, well-ventilated indoor spaces are the next best option
  - Small, crowded, poorly ventilated spaces are the least safe
  - Consider collaborating with community organizations for safe spaces to host visits



# FAMILY VISITS

## Transportation

- Children should always be transported using the car safety seat or seatbelt that is appropriate for the size of the child – for every trip in every vehicle
- Ideally, each child should use their own safety seat
- Clean child safety seats, but do not disinfect – cleaning chemicals can degrade the plastic & cause a seat to be less crash-worthy
- Avoid crowding people from different households into the same car
- Keep windows open when possible
- Wear face masks



# FAMILY VISITS

## Reducing Infection Risks



- Masks – all participants need to wear them properly
  - Exceptions: those under 2 years old
  - Those who physically could not remove the mask themselves in an emergency
- Frequent hand washing
- Use gloves for diaper changes – and then still wash hands!



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# FAMILY VISITS: REDUCING INFECTION RISKS



Try to Avoid  
This



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# FAMILY VISITS: REDUCING INFECTION RISKS



Encourage  
This



# FAMILY VISITS

## Managing Food Safely

- Provide food in individually wrapped servings
- No buffet-style serving
- No shared bags or plates of snacks
- No sharing sips or bites
- Wash hands before & after eating!



# FAMILY VISITS

## Safe Activities



- Look for ways to enjoy each other's company but maintain physical distance
- Kick a soccer ball around
- Plan a craft or gardening activity where participants can space out & each have their own supplies
- Go for a walk or a hike
- Go to a playground



# FAMILY VISITS

## Cleaning up Afterwards

- Wash hands upon returning to the house
- Consider bathing and changing clothes if there was physical contact with folks from other households



# VIRTUAL VISITS

- Can be a huge win
  - Can allow for more frequent connections
  - Can avoid transportation or location barriers
  - Can provide safe visits when COVID precludes in-person visits
    - Planned or last-minute
- Can also be very complex and disruptive
  - Technology barriers
  - Disruptive to work & school that's also happening in a household at the same time
  - May not meet the developmental needs of the child



# VIRTUAL VISITS

## Planning

- Technology needs
  - All involved need access to devices & reliable internet
  - Some participants may need help learning to use electronic devices
  - Need real-time tech support during visits in case something isn't working
- Having virtual visits available as a back-up when in-person visit plans have to change
  - COVID risks may require last-minute changes to planned in-person visits
  - Pre-planning back-up virtual visits can help to reduce disappointment



# VIRTUAL VISITS

## Making them Developmentally Appropriate

- Recognize the limits of capacity for virtual engagement
  - More frequent but shorter visits are generally better than fewer long visits
  - Can adjust for an individual child's needs and attention span
- Infants & toddlers: 5-15 min
- Preschoolers: 15-20 min
- Young school-aged children: 20-30 min
- Older school-aged kids & teens: 30-60 min



# VIRTUAL VISITS

## Plan Activities

- Read books
- Play board games
- Have a dance party
- Share the child's schoolwork, artwork, new sports accomplishment
- Watch funny videos
- Play "Simon Says"
- Sing together
- "Ride" roller coasters together with point-of-view videos



# KEEPING SAFE THROUGH TRANSITIONS

- It's hard to keep your household safe in the pandemic when kids who come and go in your household may not be experiencing the same level of safety precautions elsewhere
- The goal is to keep everybody safe, while also making the children in your care feel welcomed & not stigmatized
- This will get easier over time, as more & more people are able to be vaccinated



# HOUSEHOLD CLEANING

- Have everybody in the household wash their hands frequently
  - Especially after being out of the house, as well as after using the bathroom and before eating
- Clean high-touch surfaces daily
- Follow up-to-date [CDC guidelines](#)



# FOOD SAFETY

- Important to not share food, drink, or serving utensils
- Serve meals by the plate, not family-style
- Space household members far apart around the table, as able



# BATHROOMS

- Clean & disinfect bathrooms frequently
- If someone is sick, have them use a separate bathroom, if possible
  - Disinfect that bathroom carefully, following [CDC guidelines](#)



# KEEPING THE HOUSEHOLD SAFE (EVEN WHEN OUT OF THE HOUSE)

- All household members should wear masks when outside of the home and around any other people who do not live in your home
  - Follow [CDC guidelines](#) on how to use masks effectively
- Avoid crowds, especially indoors
- Avoid bringing the kids to run errands, when possible; use curbside pick-up & home delivery options when you can



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## KEEPING THE HOUSEHOLD SAFE



**GET VACCINATED!**



# VACCINE SAFETY

## Was it made too quickly?

- The clinical trials to establish effectiveness & safety were completed just like for every new medication or vaccine
- What was eliminated were the administrative delays between steps
- Production capacity was developed simultaneously with the clinical trials, so that they were ready to start making vaccine as soon as it was approved as safe & effective



# VACCINE SAFETY

## How do the COVID Vaccines work?

- The available vaccines work by sending a message to your cells that teaches your cells how to make the spike protein on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus
- Once that message is delivered, the messenger breaks down & goes away
- When our cells make the spike protein, our immune system recognizes it as foreign, & builds an army of immune cells to get rid of it
- That army of immune cells sticks around – and if the real spike protein-covered SARS-CoV-2 virus shows up in your system, that army knocks it out before it can get started making you sick!



## SIDE EFFECTS OF COVID VACCINES

- In the 24-48 hours after receiving the vaccine some people experience:
  - Arm soreness
  - Headache
  - Muscle aches
  - Fatigue
  - Fever



- Allergic reactions have been reported, but are very rare
  - Happen immediately – you'll be asked to wait 15 minutes after your shot due to this



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## ONGOING SAFETY MONITORING

- There is a long-standing system in the US to monitor potential adverse reactions to vaccines – VAERS
- This system *worked* in identifying a possible rare side effect – 6 out of more than 6.8 million doses!
- The FDA paused the Johnson & Johnson vaccine out of extreme caution to investigate these rare cases of blood clotting.
- After a detailed & careful review they determined that the vaccine was safe, and the benefits outweighed the risks



# COVID VACCINES...

- CANNOT give you COVID
- CANNOT change your DNA
- CANNOT make you infertile or cause miscarriages
- DO NOT implant microchips or tracking devices into people



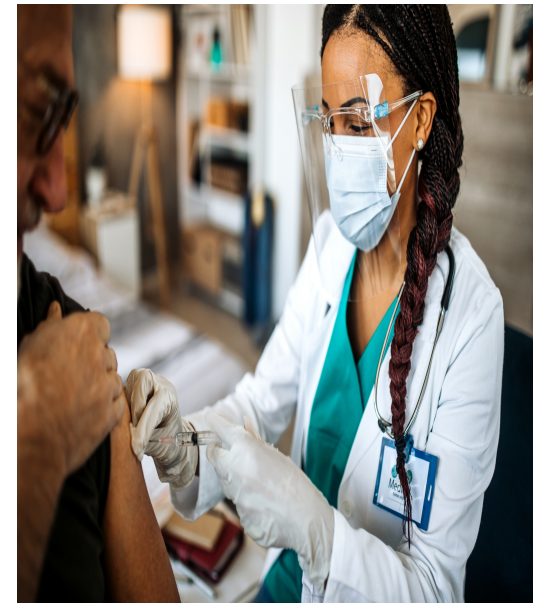
# ARE VACCINES SAFE IF YOU ARE PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING?

- So far there is no evidence of any harm to mother or baby when a woman receives a COVID vaccine while pregnant
  - We do know that pregnant women are at higher risk for serious illness & death from COVID disease
- There is no evidence, and no reason to think that there would be any harm to a breastfeeding infant when a mother receives a COVID vaccine
- There is now some evidence showing that infants gain immunity from their mother's vaccine, both before birth and through breast milk



# WHAT'S NEXT AFTER THE VACCINE?

- It takes about 2 weeks after receiving the full series of the vaccine to develop full immunity – then you are considered “fully vaccinated”
- The vaccines are 72% - 95% effective at preventing infection
  - Virtually 100% effective at preventing serious illness & death
- We need almost everybody to have a vaccine - so that the virus has no human hosts – before we can let down our guard
  - So until we reach that level of immunity, we all need to continue to wear our masks, avoid crowds, etc



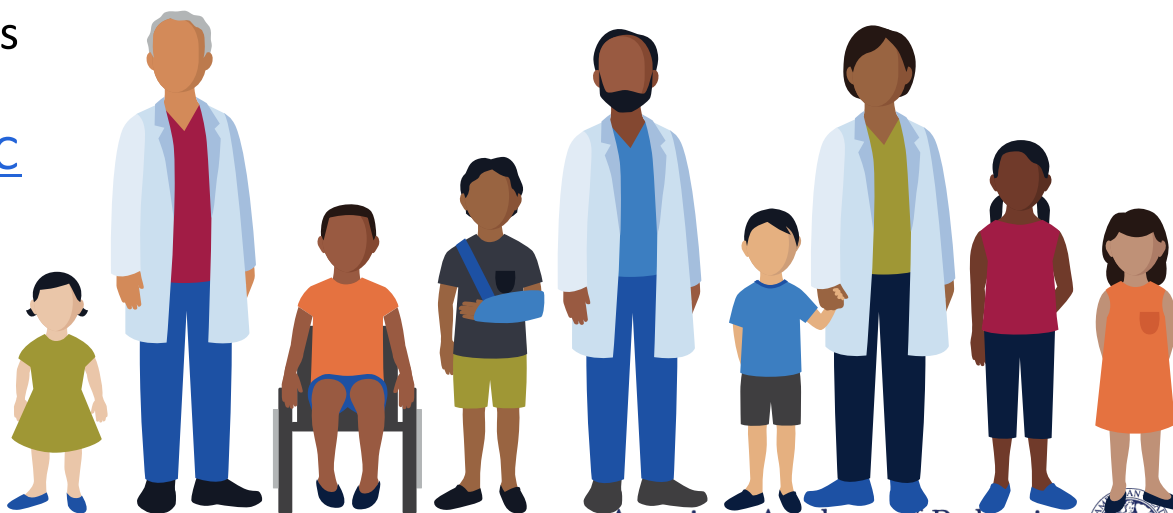
# WHAT CAN YOU DO ONCE YOU ARE FULLY VACCINATED?

- Gather with other fully vaccinated people, without masks, indoors or outdoors
- Gather carefully with one household of unvaccinated people, if they are low-risk for serious infection
- The CDC will continue to update their [guidelines](#)



# SUMMARY

- Child Welfare services, including foster parenting and family visits, are essential services
- The COVID pandemic offers new opportunities for innovation
- Our understanding of this virus is rapidly changing – check in frequently with the [AAP](#) & [CDC](#)
- Get your vaccine and encourage others to do the same!



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