

# Guidelines for virtual monitoring of children, their families and residential care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic requires adapting and/or developing services and programming to continue to best serve children and families throughout the rapidly changing times. Disruptions to families, friendships, daily routines and the wider community can have negative consequences on children's well-being, learning, development and protection. In addition, measures used to prevent and control the spread of the virus can expose children to protection risks. Home-, facility-, community- and zonal-based quarantine and isolation measures, whilst critical to slow the spread of the virus, can negatively impact children and their families. It is important for those working with vulnerable children and families to stay informed about the increased child protection risks that can and do occur during an emergency. See this Interagency [Technical Guidance](#) on child protection during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Safeguarding procedures should be reviewed to determine responsibilities, reporting and referral pathways in the case of suspected or substantiated child protection violations. At the same time children, families and communities are resilient and can be helped to draw upon their strengths in these times of stress.

Whilst in-person monitoring visits to family homes, alternative care placements or residential care facilities are not possible during times of quarantine, restricted movement and social distancing, it is critical that programs and case workers maintain regular phone or virtual contact with the children and families they have responsibility for.<sup>2</sup>

- **Conduct COVID-19 awareness raising** via phone or internet with basic messages on signs and symptoms, hygiene measures and social distancing, health referral pathways and hotline numbers.
- **Support caregivers** around emotional wellbeing of children, talking to children about COVID-19, mitigating childhood stress, parenting, continuing school at home, home activities, and scenario planning for families in the event a caregiver falls ill.
- Ensure that children receive **clear, child-friendly, gender-sensitive messages** about COVID-19, including proper handwashing and social distancing. Examples can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
- **Design and deliver simple messages** to reassure children and to help caregivers appropriately respond to the informational and emotional needs of children.
- **Identify strategies for providing psychosocial support** to children, especially to those under quarantine. See [here](#) for some examples of psychosocial support to children highlighted in Intervention 3 and [here](#) for suggestions for adolescents.
- Before caregivers fall ill, work with them to outline **alternative care solutions** that may be needed if they fall ill, are quarantined, hospitalized or worse.
- Ensure that phone contacts **maintain confidentiality and the families' privacy** by making phone calls away from other adults as much as possible and not using speaker phone.

## Sample monitoring plan

### Twice weekly phone calls to PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS

- Attain update on status of all family members
- Track case plan actions
- Provide simple guidance on prevention, signs and symptoms, prevention, and emergency numbers
- Assess for and make needed referrals
- Provide basic psychosocial support

### Twice weekly phone calls with CHILDREN and ADOLESCENTS (able to converse via phone)

- Attain update on health and well-being status
- Track case plan actions
- Provide child-friendly guidance on preventative measures, maintaining learning
- Provide basic psychosocial support

### Twice weekly phone calls to RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

- Attain updates on entry and exit of children
- Provide adult and child-friendly guidance on preventive measures
- Check in about regular supplies, especially WASH, and educational / recreational supplies
- Assess for child protection issues

### Weekly communication with local to national government partners, child protection and other relevant (health, WASH, education, protection, shelter) humanitarian coordination mechanisms, civil society networks and community leaders

- Attain updated on actions they are taking to protect families and children
- Report / follow up any child protection issues
- Review, update and synchronize key messages
- Identify areas in need of additional support
- Identify possible linkages, collaboration opportunities and coordinate efforts

**Case file records should be completed for all phone or virtual meetings with families or children**

<sup>1</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic, Version 1, March 2019. <https://alliancecpha.org/en/COVID19>

<sup>2</sup> More on case management at: <http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/system/files/resource/files/Child-Protection-Case-Management-Guidance-Covid19.pdf>