



# GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH HOME VISITING OPERATIONS

June 17, 2021

This Guidance applies to MDH or local health department staff making home visits while COVID-19 continues to be present in Maryland. It is designed to promote the safety of both staff and the home occupants, while allowing vital home services to be delivered. A determination should always be made as to whether the goals of the home visit can be satisfied using phone contact, video, or other virtual methods instead of an in-home visit. This guidance is based on [CDC operational guidance for field-based public health staff](#), as well as [HRSA guidance for maternal and child health programs on home visiting information during COVID-19](#). The guidance applies whether staff are vaccinated or not fully vaccinated.

The client should always be contacted prior to the home visit to discuss how the visit will take place. If possible, send the client an agency description of the home visit process with any specific contact information for questions.

Supplies of additional cloth face coverings should be available if not part of a care package left for the client. Consider providing a standard package of relevant protective materials and information as part of each home visit. All visits should include materials on the [Masks on Maryland](#) and [GoVAX](#) campaigns. Language-appropriate materials are available for [general information](#) as well as [vaccine information](#).

## **Before the Home Visit**

Agency staff who are [self quarantined](#), in medical [isolation](#), or who answer YES to any question on the Department of Budget and Management's [screening questionnaire](#) should not conduct a home visit. Generally, if staff are not feeling well for **ANY** reason, the home visit should be deferred.

Staff should contact the home visit client the day of the visit and ask the home visit client if they or anyone in the household:

- Has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet cleared to discontinue isolation;
- Has [symptoms](#) of or recent positive test for COVID-19 (and not meeting the criteria for release from isolation);
- Is under evaluation for COVID-19 (for example, waiting for the results of a viral test to confirm infection); or
- Is otherwise not feeling well for any reason.

If the answer to any question is **YES (for any member of the household)**, the staff member should work with the supervisor to determine the appropriateness of visits based on the responses, current health department recommendations, and case specific circumstances. If a determination is made that the visit should be performed, it should be conducted using procedures described in the [CDC guidance on interviewing and assessing persons with symptoms](#). If the client or household member appears to be seriously ill, encourage the client to seek appropriate medical attention.

If the client cannot be reached prior to the scheduled home visit, consult with the supervisor.

If used by the program, send the In-Person Visitation Agreement to the client prior to the visit if possible.

### **At the Time of the Home Visit**

Upon arrival for the visit, if the client or a client's household member appears ill (and this has not previously been discussed with the supervisor), contact the supervisor.

- If someone other than the client in the home is ill, but the visit has been determined by the staff member and supervisor to be necessary, the ill person should remain physically distanced from home visiting staff during the visit.
- Make sure that the client and all household members agree that everyone who is able will wear a face covering for the duration of the home visit, except if necessary to complete a physical examination.
- All staff should follow respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, and hand hygiene throughout the duration of the visit:
  - ✓ Maintain social distancing with all persons (at least 6 feet) unless conducting a physical examination
  - ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick
  - ✓ Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available), especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; and before or after physical contact with other people or frequently touched surfaces.
  - ✓ Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth
  - ✓ Cover cough or sneeze with a tissue, throw the tissue in the trash, and perform hand hygiene afterwards
  - ✓ Wear a cloth face covering or personal protective equipment at all times, as appropriate (gloves should be worn if indicated by universal precautions, but are not required for all home visits)

### **After the Home Visit**

Within 3 days after the home visit, contact the client and ask whether anyone in the household has become ill or has otherwise had a change in health status. If so, discuss with the supervisor. If home visiting staff become symptomatic or are diagnosed with COVID-19 and the home visit would be within the current CDC definition of close contact, the agency should contact the client with appropriate information about contact tracing and recommended follow up. Provide any additional information on the COVID-19 vaccine requested by the client.

### **Home Visiting Checklist**

- ☐ Pre-screening health questionnaire completed for staff on day of visit, prior to visit
- ☐ Pre-screening health questionnaire completed for home-visiting client(s) prior to visit
- ☐ Home visiting staff has the following resources available:
  - ☐ Disposable or cloth face coverings for household members
  - ☐ Hand sanitizer
  - ☐ Information for Home-Visiting Clients
  - ☐ In-Person Visitation Agreement (if applicable)
  - ☐ Print materials on the [Masks on Maryland](#) and [GoVAX](#) campaigns. Language-appropriate materials are available for [general information](#) as well as [vaccine information](#).

### **Resources**

- [Health Resources & Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health, Important Home Visiting Information During COVID-19](#)
- [CDC: Protections that Pertain to Field-Based Public Health Staff](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- [How to wear a mask](#) (CDC)
- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#) (CDC)
- [What to do if you are sick with COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- [Maryland's COVID-19 Response](#)
- [Maryland COVIDVax](#)
- [Maryland CovidLink FAQs](#)
- [Department of Budget and Management's COVID-19 Information for Employees](#)