



Family Visit Vignettes July 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying public health measures enacted to slow its spread has had a deep impact on family visits with children and youth in out-of-home settings. In May, the Provincial Task Force published a series of recommendations aimed at helping to guide Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies as they facilitated family visits, both in virtual spaces and in-person. As the province progresses through the early stages of "re-opening" and public health restrictions are easing, the number of in-person family visits is increasing. Across the province, many creative solutions are being employed to maximize both the levels of safety and number of visits.

What follows are just a few examples of what family visits can look like in this "new normal." We recognize there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the challenges involved with family visits, and we continue to encourage agencies to consult with their local public health unit as needed.

Our hope is these vignettes will provide inspiration and insight into what can be made possible during extraordinary times.

These are based on actual examples provided by agencies, but some details have been modified to ensure anonymity.



We are using the large backyard space at one of our internal transition houses. This has allowed us to take families out on the land and facilitate visits in a natural and less institutional space. Families are able to participate in cultural and learning based programming/activities such as gardening, use of a Teepee to have quiet family time, read cultural stories and drumming. The site has been arranged to meet all family's needs with portable washrooms, handwashing stations, outdoor tents, tables, chairs, outdoor play supplies and a variety of age/stage activities and culturally supportive items.

The pandemic has made us look at family access in a very different way and we have embraced outdoor visits, which has been very positive. After one visit, a mother cried and said she had never had access to her children anywhere but in a small room at CAS. She was so happy about being able to visit with her children in a park. The individual solutions we have found are great, but the change in overall approach will have a lasting effect and is truly meaningful.

We have rented tents and erected them on our property to provide family visits. These tents provide a controlled environment away from the elements, are easy and quick to keep clean, and offer privacy for families. The feedback has been amazing, and we are able to adhere to the necessary health and safety precautions.



An example of a very successful visit involved a baby's first birthday approaching, and a complex family situation. The parents were not always able to physically distance and the foster parents have a health compromised individual in their home. A plan was made with everyone's input where everyone could feel safe. They met in an outdoor space, where foster parents brought a cake and gifts for the baby to be able to open and they celebrated together with her parents.

We have partnered with one of our local Indigenous cultural centres who have been able to provide a physical space in their building to host access visits. They have also help facilitate these visits and our team has worked with their staff to ensure the space and meetings adhere to public health guidelines. We have received a lot of positive feedback from the Indigenous families we serve who appreciate being able to have visits with family in a setting that has cultural significance to them.

We have repurposed a vacant agency home to provide family visits. This provides a home-like setting for the visit with lots of space to physically distance. There is the added benefit of being able to provide facilities like laundry to support the visiting parents who are underhoused.

Sometimes, despite all of our best efforts, an in person can't happen because a family does not pass the public health screen. In these cases, we have committed to filming a quick video greeting that is shared with everyone involved to ensure there is some connection on the day.

