

March 25, 2021

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ALL COUNTY LETTER NO. 21-28**

This All County Letter (ACL) provides additional guidance to counties implementing the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Home Visiting Program (HVP). This ACL provides additional guidance on telehealth encounters and “virtual visits” within the CalWORKs HVP.



KIM JOHNSON  
DIRECTOR

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**  
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GOVERNOR

March 25, 2021

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 21-28

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
ALL CONSORTIA REPRESENTATIVES  
ALL COUNTY WELFARE-TO-WORK COORDINATORS  
ALL COUNTY CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS

SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA WORK OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO  
KIDS (CALWORKS) HOME VISITING PROGRAM: UPDATED  
GUIDANCE REGARDING TELEHEALTH AND VIRTUAL VISITS

REFERENCE: [WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS CODE \(WIC\) ARTICLE 3.4. \(11330.6 - 11330.9\); SENATE BILL 840 \(CHAPTER 29, STATUTES OF 2018\); ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER DATED JULY 31, 2018; COUNTY FISCAL LETTER \(CFL\) NO. 18/19-49; \(CFL\) NO. 18/19-50; \(CFL\) NO. 18/19-51](#)

This letter provides additional guidance to counties implementing the CalWORKs Home Visiting Program (HVP) and outlines the California Department of Social Services' (Department) current and updated guidance for telehealth/virtual visits. This letter also includes additional resources on the four major home visiting models.

## **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the CalWORKs HVP is to support positive health, development, and well-being outcomes for pregnant and parenting women, families, and infants born into poverty through the implementation of evidence-based home visiting program services. By helping families achieve stability while participating in the HVP, the program hopes to lay the foundation for other long-term goals such as future educational opportunities, economic mobility, and greater financial opportunities. This whole family approach to service delivery aims to improve family engagement practices, support healthy development of young children living in poverty, and prepare parents for robust engagement in Welfare-to-Work (WTW) activities and employment.

### **CURRENT TELEHEALTH GUIDANCE DURING CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, home visits funded by the CalWORKs HVP were required to be held in-person. However, to promote flexibility for counties and their home visiting agencies, and to ensure the health and safety of home visitors and their clients, during the pandemic the Department has allowed home visitors to meet with their clients through virtual home visits. This is accomplished through telehealth platforms that are compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Home visitors can maintain contact with their clients through video calls, texting, and messaging applications. To maintain fidelity to the models, counties and their home visiting contractors must follow the guidelines established by their model representatives.

### **UPDATED TELEHEALTH GUIDANCE**

The Department will continue funding telehealth and virtual home visits after the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders are lifted. Telehealth home visits must be implemented with fidelity to the evidence-based home visiting model(s), and home visiting providers must stay up to date on model guidance. Home visiting agencies that would like to continue to use telehealth/virtual home visits must request approval from their County Welfare Department (CWD) partners and ensure that the platform used meets fidelity with the evidence-based home visiting models. Once approval is granted, CWDs utilizing virtual home visits after COVID-19 are required to notify the Department in writing with a description of the change in how services are offered.

### **DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS**

In order for the Department to fund telehealth or virtual visits, the following requirements must be met:

- Telehealth visits must have previously been approved and implemented in the evidence-based home visiting model.
- Telehealth home visits must be implemented with fidelity to the evidence-based home visiting model(s).
- Alternate locations, including virtual, must be agreed upon by both parties.
- In general, telehealth home visits should be used as supplemental visits. They may be used as primary visits under certain circumstances, such as inclement weather, safety situations, or client schedule conflicts.
- Home visiting agencies that choose telehealth home visits must first obtain approval from their CWD partners. The contract between the CWD and its contractors must be amended to reflect this change.

- Home visitors who plan to provide virtual home visits to clients should be trained in the technology to be used during the home visits, prior to conducting virtual home visits.
- Virtual home visits must be conducted on HIPAA-compliant video communication products. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has provided a list here: [HIPPA Information](#)

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

As counties and their home visiting organizations continue to provide home visits through a telehealth platform, it is important to stay up to date on model guidance and to ensure that all home visitors continue to use implicit bias and cultural competency practices.

- [Early Head Start – Home Visiting Option \(EHS-HBO\)](#)
- [Healthy Families America \(HFA\)](#)
- [Nurse-Family Partnership \(NFP\)](#)
- [Parents as Teachers \(PAT\)](#)

If you have any questions about CalWORKs HVP, you may contact the CalWORKs and Family Resilience Branch by emailing [CalWORKsHVP@dss.ca.gov](mailto:CalWORKsHVP@dss.ca.gov). If you have any fiscal questions, please direct them to [Fiscal.Systems@dss.ca.gov](mailto:Fiscal.Systems@dss.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

### ***Original Document Signed By***

JENNIFER HERNANDEZ, Deputy Director  
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division  
California Department of Social Services