

WV Birth to Three COVID 19 Response – Questions and Answers

1. **In the newly released TA Bulletin, “Next Phase in WV Birth to Three’s COVID Response – Face to Face (F-F) and Virtual Services and Additional Procedure Codes”, it says that WV Birth to Three is moving into a new phase in the COVID 19 pandemic response. Can you tell me more about what has happened prior to this phase and what we can expect?**

Phase 1- In March of 2020, Governor Jim Justice announced West Virginia was in a state of emergency due to the COVID pandemic. Within two days, WV Birth to Three quickly developed policies and procedures to ensure that all eligible infants/toddlers and their families were able to receive services.

Phase 2- In July of 2021, WV Birth to Three moved to allowing practitioners to serve families either virtually or face to face based on the desire of the family and the availability of practitioners. Everyone was required to follow WV Birth to Three safety protocols to protect the health and safety of the children, families, and our practitioners.

Phase 3- In September of 2022, the World Health Organization reported that the world is now moving out of the pandemic as COVID 19 is now endemic- this virus will unfortunately be with us forever. WV Birth to Three determined based on the reopening of schools, childcare, other home visitation programs, restaurants, shops, community events, fairs, and festivals that is it time to move to the next phase of our response- the elimination of phone calls as a method of service delivery. Families will continue to have the option of selecting face to face or virtual services. Please review the TA Bulletin: “Next Phase in WV Birth to Three’s COVID Response – Face to Face (F-F) and Virtual Services and Additional Procedure Codes” by copy and pasting this URL into your internet browser:

http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/tabulletins/tab_Next_Phase_BTT_COVID_Response_codes.pdf

2. **I understand that many states are moving back to face to face only. Is WV Birth to Three going to move to only providing face to face services?**

WV Birth to Three continues to offer both virtual and face to face.

3. **Why are we no longer allowed to provide services by phone?**

If you are providing family coaching by phone call as a direct service practitioner, there is not an opportunity to see the child, to see the child and family interacting, to evaluate the quality of the interaction to provide high quality family coaching. Families also cannot see the Intervention Activity Note as you complete it with them. Families play a role in the completion of the note. And as a Direct Service Practitioner, if you have stable internet access, best practice would be to turn on your camera to build rapport with the family.

If you are a Service Coordinator, there is not an opportunity to share documents to assure the family is fully informed before signing consents, the IFSP, reviews, etc. Families also cannot see the Service Coordination Activity Note as you complete it with them. Families play a role in the completion of the note. And as a Service Coordinator, if you have stable

internet access, best practice would be to turn on your camera to build rapport with the family.

Here is a wonderful resource highlighting best practices in video conferencing:

[Video Conferencing 101.pdf \(ectacenter.org\)](https://ectacenter.org/video-conferencing-101.pdf)

4. Why can practitioners call into IFSP and IFSP review meetings?

Part C of IDEA allows anyone who participated in the evaluation and assessment process to participate in the IFSP meeting by phone. Practitioners who call in only will be authorized to bill at the Service Provider Location rate.

5. I have families who have limited internet access or phone time, can families call into an IFSP and IFSP review meeting?

Yes, in those rare instances where a family has limited access and the Service Coordinator is unable to facilitate the meeting face to face, a family may call into the virtual platform using the number provided in the email confirmation. The Interim or Ongoing Service Coordinator will still be required to host the meeting via Zoom, Go to Training, Google Meet or Microsoft teams for the team members participation. The Service Coordinator and members of the IFSP team who attended the meeting via the virtual platform (not by phone only) will be authorized to bill as having attended virtually. The Interim and/or Service Coordinator should also be assisting the family in exploring technology that will help them in obtaining access.

6. Why did the changes happen so quickly?

There is never a good time to announce changes. The state office truly knows how difficult change can be. Unfortunately, this change had to occur quickly for the data system and forms to roll out within days of each other for the least amount of impact with service authorizations.

7. I serve many children whose IFSP says I am going to serve the child and family face to face, virtual and phone call. Do I need to have my Service Coordinator change all my authorizations?

No, your service coordinator does not need to change your authorization. You do however have to change the way you provide your service. Changes will occur at the next natural juncture.

8. I only serve families by phone. Do I need to have my Service Coordinator change my authorizations?

No, your service coordinator does not need to change your authorization. You do however have to change the way you provide your service. Changes will occur at the next natural juncture.

9. Is Virtual a delivery method or location?

Both, virtual is a delivery method for providing early intervention services as identified on the IFSP. Virtual is also listed as the location on the authorization to document that the service is being provided to the family in their home but virtually not face to face.

10. What if there is an area where there is no internet available and there is no SC or direct service practitioner available to provide face to face services either?

WV Birth to Three is committed to assisting families in accessing services. **Please document what strategies you have used to support the family in accessing internet, such as helping the family set up an email account, learning how to use Zoom, applying for funding to purchase a device etc. As always, we encourage you to reach out to your WV Birth to Three Regional Technical Assistance Specialist for support. Please provide the child's ID number so that we may find a solution for the family. If you do not know who your TA Specialist is, please see the [WVBTT Regional Technical Assistance Specialist Map](#).**

11. Are there resources available to assist families in accessing internet or phone coverage?

Here is information on a valuable resource for assisting families with access under the [US Department of Education Affordable Connectivity Program](#).

12. If a practitioner is attending a teaming meeting virtually then loses internet connection and rejoins the meeting by phone call, how does the SC authorize their participation?

The authorization will reflect the practitioner's participation for the majority of the time during the meeting. For example, if the practitioner participated by virtual platform for 40 minutes, lost connection, then participated by phone for 20 more minutes until the end of the meeting, the authorization will be entered as virtual. In addition, if the practitioner participated by phone for 30 minutes due to temporary loss of internet, then gained internet access and participated by virtual platform for the remaining 10 minutes, the authorization will be entered as Service Provider Location.

13. If a family has difficulties with internet connection and cannot join a teaming meeting virtually but can join by phone call, can the teaming continue?

Yes, a family may call into the virtual platform using the number provided in the email confirmation. The Interim or Ongoing Service Coordinator will still be required to host the meeting via Zoom, Go to Training, Google Meet or Microsoft teams.

14. What do we tell a family if they have an internet connection and can participate in the IFSP Meeting virtually, but prefer to participate by phone call?

The Interim or Ongoing Service Coordinator must document that they have informed the family that they do not have to turn on their cameras during the meeting and the importance for the family to be able to see the forms and documents that are being discussed. If the family still does not want to participate virtually, the family may call into the virtual meeting using the number provided in the email confirmation. **The Interim or**

Ongoing Service Coordinator will still be required to host the meeting via Zoom, Go to Training, Google Meet or Microsoft teams. The Service Coordinator and members of the IFSP team who attended the meeting via the virtual platform (not by phone only) will be authorized to bill as having attended virtually.

15. What do we do if an Ongoing Service Coordinator or Direct Service Practitioner is still providing services by phone only after December 1, 2022?

Please provide the Ongoing Service Coordinator or Direct Service Practitioner's name to your Regional Technical Assistance Specialist as the individual may not be aware of the changes. We will reach out to support them.

16. A family I serve in ABC County has no internet provider in their area. There are no face-to-face Ongoing Service Coordinators in her area as well. What if we cannot find an OSC to do face to face for family?

Please document what strategies you have used to support the family in accessing internet, such as helping the family set up an email account, learning how to use Zoom, applying for funding to purchase a device etc. As always, we encourage you to reach out to your WV Birth to Three Regional Technical Assistance Specialist for support. Please provide the child's ID number so that we may find a solution for the family. If you do not know who your TA Specialist is, please see the TA Map.

17. I have families that request to do a phone call instead of a virtual occasionally as they are visiting somewhere that does not have service.

You will reschedule your visit for when the family is at home.

18. I have a few families that have internet and CAN do virtual but PREFER phone calls for OSC. Do we just tell them no?

WV Birth to Three recognizes the importance of family's having a choice. The Service Coordinator should explain to the family the value of providing services virtually or face to face and that Birth to Three did not provide services by phone prior to the pandemic. If a family would like to speak to someone from the state office, please provide them contact information for the WV Birth to Three Regional Technical Specialist so we may provide the family with more information.

19. I am concerned about having separate authorizations for virtual and face to face. I have many families that like a mixture of both. What do I do in this situation?

The IFSP is a legal document detailing the service commitments we are making to the family. Through discussions with the family and team you will determine how services will be provided in a way that will best meet the family's need. Families have the right to fully understand how their services are to be provided. If it is decided that your service will be provided in the home twice a month face to face and you will also provide service virtually twice a month – that is your commitment to the family. You will detail on the IFSP Service Grid page the commitment for intensity/frequency for each service. If you have a commitment to provide your service face to face and it so happens that a family asks for

a one-time service virtual you can do that within the face-to-face authorization that you have. This should be a rare occurrence.

20. What if an unexpected situation on the part of the family should occur such as sickness, family emergency, inclement weather, etc., and the family would like a virtual visit instead of face to face on the day the visit is scheduled?

If the family shares on the day of a scheduled home visit, an expected situation has occurred and they would like you to do a virtual visit instead of face to face, you must clearly document the circumstances that require the change in service delivery method on the Intervention or Service Coordination Activity Note. When these situations occur, your authorization will not need to be changed and you would not need to do a Missed Appointment Documentation Form.

You must ultimately honor the service commitment to the family as identified on the IFSP. **When there is a combination of face to face and virtual on the IFSP, you may not begin to provide services face to face and then change to providing all services virtually because it is more convenient for the practitioner.**

21. What if the Interim or Ongoing Service Coordinator is still completing IFSP meetings by phone call only?

Interim and Ongoing Service Coordinators should not be facilitating IFSP meetings by phone call only. Please notify your WV BTT Regional Technical Assistance Specialist if this is occurring.

22. I have so many questions, who can I talk to?

As stated in the TA Bulletin and as always, please reach out to your WVBTT Regional Technical Assistance Specialist.