



## COVID-19 Home Visit Directive

Issued by: The Housing Support Services Recovery Workgroup  
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The Housing Support Services Recovery Workgroup recognizes the vulnerability of clients served through permanent housing programs. The work of case management and service coordination is essential services designed to ensure each individual serviced is supported to achieve housing stability and personal health and safety. This work can only be done with regular interactions with each household, including at their place of residence. It is critical that we maintain eyes on each household and space. Given this, the Housing Support Services Workgroup is recommending that **any provider not currently conducting home visits for all clients, minimally on a monthly basis, resumes this component of service delivery beginning Monday, July 13, 2020**. This includes at least one in-person home visit with each client each month. We want to ensure the highest level of safety and services to all staff and clients.

It is important to note that each organization will have different needs arise due to staffing challenges which can come in multiple forms, from staff being sick to child-care issues to households with at risk members. These will impact the level of service regardless of how many procedures are put in place and would be handled at the organizational level. As this may include adjustments to staffing, we recommend exploring the following options as needed:

- Use of team approach to get all clients seen in home. Staff out in the field can conduct home visits to get eyeballs in the unit to assess for potential risks to housing. Staff working remotely can complete collateral services and remote contacts to reduce the risks to housing;
- Use of flexible scheduling to allow for staff visits outside of standard business hours to accommodate family adaptations to loss of care services for family members; and
- Leveraging available staff from other program areas to support community visits.

At a minimum we recommend the following standards for each agency as it relates to home visits:

- Follow home visit guidance issued by HHS (available at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Homelessness/CoCInfoCoronavirus.html>). This includes instructions on:
  - Screening clients for symptoms
  - Face masks/coverings guidelines
  - Washing hands, or utilizing hand sanitizer before and after each visit

- Ensure each staff member conducting visits has a copy of the above as a regular point of reference
- Provide PPE for all staff to the level that they need
- Supplement the monthly face-to-face visit with video conferencing. Tablets/cell phones with video calling app capability can greatly enhance services to majority of our clients but more so for identified vulnerable clients (MH/physical health/drug misuse and DV). On top of the once a month face to face, we can see the client, living environment etc. more frequently. This also will prepare us if further "stay at home" order is declared in the winter.
- Utilize self-testing and available County pop-up sites for Covid-19 testing for staff

At a minimum we recommend the following for each client as it relates to home visits:

- Provide face masks and cleaning supplies to all clients as needed
- Encourage self-testing or connection to available testing sites for clients as applicable
- Continue to educate clients on importance of complying with guidelines and understanding the risks. Please see attached document as a resource

In addition to the minimum monthly face-to-face/home visit, visits should occur when concerns or issues arise that cannot be addressed remotely. These include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of Response. If you have been unable to reach a client over the past week.
- Domestic Violence (DV) Incident. If a DV situation was reported, and you are unable to get in touch with the client.
- Child Wellbeing. If there are minor children in the household and an emergency situation was reported.
- Maintenance Challenges. Where reports of no a/c, heat, gas leaks, flooding, electrical or water issues, and especially where a discrepancy in reporting from client and landlord exists.
- Housing/lease-up. Supporting a client through housing search, lease-up and move-in process.
- High Need/Vulnerable Clients. Certain clients may need more regular in-person contact due to their level of need/vulnerability.
- As Needed. Providers should be prepared for other challenges that may arise where remote support cannot effectively address the challenge.