

Virtual Visits

Recommendations by Age and Access Resources

By Rose Wentz

School age

Frequency: 30-45 minutes 3 to 4 times a week. Daily calls are better.

School age children will be impacted by the loss of school, teachers, friends and the routines created by this. They will know about the virus and some of the impacts it is having on the people in their lives. Being asked to stay inside or at home will be difficult for most children this age. They know about smart phones, the internet and often know more about options and activities on the WWW. Get the child involved in planning the virtual visit. Answer their questions about the virus, your health and what is happening. Children this age usually do not understand death as we do as adults. What seems like a short time to adults seems like FOREVER to school age children.

1. There are many activities on websites that are designed for children of different grades. Make the visits fun.
2. Check with the child's teacher or caregiver about how the online teaching is occurring for the child. Support the child to do their homework. Apps like Zoom allow the child to share their screen with a parent so they can view the homework. Or the parent may be able to obtain information for parents being shared by the school. Or have the caregiver or child take a photo of the homework and send it to the parent.
3. Teach the child a new skill during the call: learn a song, play a musical instrument, a dance, a religious prayer, etc.
4. Plan for the next visit together. What does the child wish to do? What can the child teach the parent?
5. Have visits with other relatives, siblings, friends or pets involved.
6. Show the child where you are, their bedroom, their yard so they can see that these things are still there.
7. Set up a contest or game between the child and you to do until your next visit.
8. Advocate that your child have contact with siblings and friends during this time.

Teenagers to young adults

Frequency: Once or twice a week for as much time as the youth needs. Allow the youth to have a say in frequency, length and when the virtual visits occur.

Youth are capable of understanding the concerns and issues related to COVID19. The adults need to explore with the youth the questions and concerns they have. Do not assume if they do not bring up the issue that there are no issues. Losing connections with school and friends have a large impact on youth, research indicates that connections with friends is strongest at this age. Some youth may have lost a job, income or housing. Past traumas may increase the stress of how to handle today's issues. They are looking for stability, concrete actions to address problems and reassurance that they have a support system that will help them through this time.

1. Talk about day to day activities.
2. Ask about school and how online learning is going. Support the youth's learning. If appropriate contact the youth's teacher.
3. Advocate that the youth can have time and resources to maintain connections with their friends.
4. Create a book for each other while contact is limited, like a journal.
5. Cook together - parents can talk a child through making a favorite family dish. Or do other learning activities together via the internet. Household tasks, hobbies, languages, music, repairs, sports, etc.
6. Check with the youth about their therapy and how it is going (or not). Advocate for the youth to have therapy. There can be virtual visits with their therapists or treatment group.
7. Do a three way call with the youth's caregiver to check in with each other.
8. Be open about your concerns, health and how you are handling the current situation.
9. Have the youth teach you something or show you how to use internet apps.

* <https://www.nccdglobal.org/blog/successful-video-visits-young-children> Cynthia Burnson, PhD

Washington State DCYS Family Time and Sibling and Relative Visits Interim Policy, March 2020

RESOURCES: Low or No Cost Technology Options for Virtual Participation and Contacts. Many new resources are being made available as the “stay at home” orders are lengthened. The list below does not include all options. Continue to check with your worker and check the internet for resources.

Phones:

Check this website for phones.

<https://www.freegovernmentcellphones.net/states/washington-government-cell-phone-providers>

Other possible resources: The child’s school may provide computers and visitation service providers maybe providing internet access to their clients

Internet programs and apps:

- Facetime - Video Calling o Get it on: Apple Products from the Apple App Store o Cost: Free o This is a video calling app that can only be downloaded from the Apple App store for video calling other Apple products
- Snapchat - Video Calling, Text Messaging, Video Messaging o Get it on: Android and Apple mobile devices. o Cost: Free o This is a video messaging app that allows all messages and conversations to not be saved.
- Whatsapp - Video Calling, Text Messaging o Get it on: Computers, and Android and Apple mobile devices. o Cost: Free o Whatsapp is an internationally used messaging app that is widely popular globally.
- Skype - Video Calling, Text Messaging o Get it on: Computers, web browsers, and Android and Apple mobile devices. o Cost: Free o Skype is a widely known video calling platform that uses Microsoft's AI technology for features such as live translations.
- Hangouts - Text Messaging, Video Calling o Get it on: Web browsers, and Android and Apple mobile devices. o Cost: Free o Google Hangouts is a robust communication platform on the web.
- Duo - Video Calling o Get it on: Android and Apple mobile devices o Cost: Free o This is the Google analog to Apple Facetime. But can be used on Android phones and iPhones.
- Signal / Telegram - Encrypted Text Messaging o Get it on: Android and Apple mobile devices o Cost: Free o Both Signal and Telegram are messaging applications that use end to end encryption.

- Facebook Messenger - Video Calling, Text Messaging
 - o Get it on: Computers, web browsers, and Android and Apple mobile devices
 - o Cost: Free
 - o This is a communication service tied to Facebook's social network.

- Microsoft Teams - Video Calling, Text Messaging, Community Management, Productivity
 - o Get it on: Computers, web browsers, and Android and Apple mobile devices.
 - o Cost: Free
 - o Teams is Microsoft's chat productivity application. It allows for collaborating and staying in contact with multiple people within the team.

- Discord - Video Calling, Text Messaging, Community Management
 - o Get it on: Computers, and Android and Apple mobile devices
 - o Cost: Free
 - o Discord is a robust community management tool. Create servers or rooms for different interests or teams to communicate and keep in touch.

- FreeConference / FreeConferenceCall / FreeConferenceCalling - Conference Calling Service that is Free
 - o Get it on: Create the account online using an email address and use the service with a phone.
 - o Cost: Free
 - o Each of the listed above are not typos. Each is an individual company that provides conference calling for free.

- Google Voice - Cloud Based Phone Number
 - o Get it on: Computers, and Android and Apple mobile devices
 - o Cost: Free if used to make calls within the United States. Calls to other countries have a cost per minute.
 - o Google Voice is a cost effective way to have a phone number and make phone calls so long as you have access to the internet.

- GotoMeeting
 - o Get it on: Computers, and Android and Apple mobile devices
 - o Cost: Free for two weeks.
 - o Video conference calling for many people

- Marco Polo
 - o Get it on: iphone and ipad
 - o Cost: free
 - o "video walkie talkie," a video chat app that lets you send quick messages back and forth.

- Zoom
 - o Get it on: Computers, and Android and Apple mobile devices
 - o Cost: Free.
 - o Video conference calling for many people, allows screen sharing, and white board.

In response to COVID-19 developments, **some internet providers are offering free services to low-income families and households with students.**

Free Comcast Xfinity internet Comcast Xfinity is currently offering its Internet Essentials program free for two months to new customers. The internet provider is also automatically increasing speeds for all Internet Essentials customers.

Comcast Xfinity Wi-Fi hotspots are also open and free to use by anyone. Free internet for students from Charter Spectrum Households with students K–12 or university students can sign up for a new Charter Spectrum internet account to get

the first two months of internet with speeds up to 100 Mbps for free. Installation fees will be waived for those who qualify for the offer. Call 1-844-488-8395 to enroll. Spectrum Wi-Fi hotspots are also currently open and free to use. Free internet for students from Altice Altice internet providers Suddenlink and Optimum are offering 60 days of free internet service for households with K–12 or college students. Internet speeds are up to 30 Mbps if you do not already have access to a home internet plan. To sign up, call 1-866-200-9522 if you live in an area with Optimum internet service, or call 1-888-633-0030 if you live in an area with Suddenlink internet service.

Free low-income internet from Cox Until May 12, 2020, Cox is offering the first month of it's low-income internet program, Connect2Compete, for free. The internet service is also providing free phone and remote desktop support for technical support during that time. For more information from the college, go to: www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/are-there-government-programs-to-help-me-get-internetservice

EveryoneOn <https://www.everyoneon.org/lowcost-offers>

EveryoneOn is a non-profit program launched to provide basic Internet connectivity to American households, especially those with school going kids. Many local internet companies are who offer free or cheap service are listed on this site.

EveryoneOn works in collaboration with major ISPs, educational institutes, and communities to bridge America's digital divide.

Free Wi-Fi Service from Educational Broadband

Educational Broadband Service is an initiative by [Federal Communications Commission](http://www.fcc.gov) (FCC), communities and educational institutes to provide free Internet at home.

Under this system, lots of schools, colleges, and universities are providing free WI-FI to students.

Check with the child's school if they are providing internet access.

Wi-Fi Anywhere from US-Municipal

Most municipalities in the US provide something called Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) or simply Municipal Wi-Fi. Access to MAN is free. Check with your local government if they have this. They often have a map where there are hot spots. This is only an option if the person can go to the hot spot.