

CASA of Travis County Temporary Visitation Protocol Effective 4/15/21

Recognizing that public health guidance is continuously evolving during this pandemic, CASA may change this protocol in the future and will issue new clear instructions when we do. The work of CASA is complex and will present many situations that would be difficult to anticipate. Please seek out your immediate supervisor as need for help navigating these protocols.

When should we visit children in-person?

Effective immediately, CASA of Travis County will resume the frequency of in-person visits required by the *Program Policies with Best Interest Recommendations*, following the COVID visitation protocols outlined below. For most children, that means monthly in-person visits. More frequent visits are allowed when in the best interest of children at the discretion of the volunteer advocate and Child Advocacy Specialist.

- Visits should occur outdoors. However, as required to assess a child's best interest and with the consent of the caregiver, advocates and staff may enter a placement for up to 15 minutes of the visit.
- Advocates and staff should observe social distancing measures at all times whether indoors or outdoors. At each visit, all present should wear a mask, refrain from physical contact, and remain at least six feet away from others whenever possible.
- Prior to each visit, the advocate or staff member should ask others involved in the visit (including the staff or advocate themselves) these health screening questions, and the visit should occur only if the answer to all questions is "no." The use of the health questions should be included in documentation. Health screening questions include:
 1. Does anyone currently have any of these symptoms: chills, fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, nasal congestion/runny nose, body aches, diarrhea/nausea/vomiting, or loss of taste or smell?
 2. Has anyone in the household been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
 3. Has anyone in the household had in-person contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
- Visits should be documented in Optima within 72 hours, noting all parties present (this is necessary for contact tracing purposes).
- Travel to visit children placed in other cities is permitted at the advocate or staff member's discretion, including overnight travel, rental cars, and flights as needed and approved per CASA policies.

What if COVID protocols cannot be followed?

If COVID protocols cannot be followed but an in-person visit is needed, the visit must be approved by the Chief Program Officer.

If COVID visitation protocols cannot be followed (including if the placement will not allow a visit due to their own concerns about health and safety) and an in-person visit is not needed to advocate for best interest at this time, document why COVID visitation protocols cannot be followed in Optima and proceed with virtual visits at increased frequency (at least twice a month).

Who will do the visit?

We understand that everyone has different risks to manage during the pandemic and do not want anyone to do in-person visits if they are not comfortable or able to do so at this time. CASA staff will assist with seeing children and youth who need a visit when the volunteer advocate is unable to do so for any reason. Please alert your supervisor if you are unable to do an in-person visit so that other arrangements can be made.

1. If the volunteer advocate is able to do the visit, they will.
2. If the volunteer advocate is unable to do the visit and the CAS is able, the CAS will.
3. If neither the volunteer advocate nor the CAS are able to do in-person visits, the CAS will arrange for another CASA staff member or intern to do the visit.

What about other types of in-person contact, such as entering a building to observe a parent-child visit or attend a meeting?

Attendance at case-related meetings in person is permitted at the advocate or staff member's discretion. We encourage remote participation whenever possible.

What about transportation?

Currently, it is not allowed for CASA advocates or staff members to transport children or others while acting on behalf of CASA of Travis County. Similarly, they should not ride in a car with another adult, such as a caseworker or an attorney.