New Jersey Department of Health Guidance to Early Intervention Providers regarding resuming In-Home Early Intervention Services
August 19, 2020

I) Purpose:

A) NJ Early Intervention System (NJEIS) services have been an essential service during the state of emergency declared by Governor Murphy in response to COVID-19. As such, NJEIS has been open and providing services, evaluations and meetings via telehealth to the maximum extent possible. The information contained in this document provides the minimum health and safety protocols to be implemented when providing NJEIS services and support to families in their homes and alternative locations as allowed under Part C of Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA).

B) These protocols are in effect and with no expiration date, until the public health officials of the State of New Jersey determine and provide alternative direction and/or guidance.

II) Target personnel:

A) All practitioners enrolled with the NJEIS and who provide direct intervention services, service coordination activities, evaluation services and/or attend in-person meetings for NJEIS purposes, are required to adhere to the protocols outlined here.

B) Staff enrolled in the NJEIS whose primary responsibilities are administrative in nature (support staff, Human Resources, etc.) and are not expected to come in contact with children and families to complete their job duties, should follow their parent organization’s health and safety protocols.

III) Training:

A) All practitioners who meet the criteria in Section II (a) will be required to complete an on-line tutorial on these procedures, prepared and provided by the Department of Health (DOH.) This will include instructions on how to don and doff masks, cleaning materials, and communication of protocols and expectations with families.

B) DOH will maintain a central database documenting the completion of practitioner training and their attestations. DOH will provide that information to the employing agency(ies) for their records.

C) At the conclusion of the tutorial, NJEIS personnel will provide evidence of understanding the presented content, and an electronically signed attestation stating their agreement to comply with these protocols. This will be stored in the NJEIS electronic training database by the EIS professional development team.
1) **Attestation**  
(a) I have completed the *NJEIS Safety Training: Protocols for Resuming In-Person Visitation with Families* online tutorial in its entirety.  
(b) I fully agree to adhere to all safety precautions outlined in the training.  
(c) I understand and agree that it is my professional responsibility to stay current on all public health mandates issued by the Governor and his representatives, as well as all DOH-NJEIS guidelines.

**IV) Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – NJEIS personnel**

**Masks**

A) All practitioners who visit in-person with NJEIS families in-home, in a service provider location or another community setting, are required to wear a mask. This applies to indoor and outdoor activities.

B) Disposable face masks are preferable, cloth or reusable masks may be used, if necessary.

C) Practitioners must put their mask on prior to greeting the family.

D) Mask are to be changed between visits.

E) If cloth/reusable masks are used NJEIS personnel should follow the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance on the use of reusable cloth face coverings and the New Jersey DOH guidance for cleaning. [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering.pdf)

**Gloves and Hand Hygiene**

A) Gloves are not required. Instead, families and providers should focus on effective hand hygiene practices in accordance with CDC handwashing guidance. [https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html)

1) Upon beginning each daily session in a new home or setting, the NJEIS practitioner must:
   (a) Wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water and/or
   (b) Generously apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer if access to soap and water is not available.

2) Upon the beginning of each session with an NJEIS practitioner, any family member interacting with NJEIS personnel (adults and children) must:
   (a) Wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water and/or
   (b) Generously apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer if access to soap and water is not available
   (c) Gloves may be considered appropriate for certain activities where the provider may contact the child’s bodily fluids (for example other oral-motor activities).

**V) Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – NJEIS Families and children**

**Masks**

A) Families must be advised of and agree to the protocols required by the NJEIS for the provision of in-home NJEIS service, including wearing of PPE and performing a self-check prior to each scheduled session.
B) Adult caregivers are required to wear masks while participating in NJEIS services. This applies to indoor and outdoor activities.

C) In keeping with the guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (June 2020)
   1) Children under 2 are not required to wear a mask
   2) Children over the age of 2, should be encouraged to wear a mask while participating in NJEIS services.
   3) Children with severe cognitive or respiratory impairments may have a hard time tolerating a cloth face covering and for these children and special precautions may be needed.

D) NJEIS staff have the right to refuse services to families who do not adhere to the mask or other NJEIS requirements.

E) NJEIS will make arrangements to provide PPE for families that do not have their own and for whom NJEIS services would otherwise be unable to be delivered.

VI) Supplies & Equipment

A) NJEIS personnel visiting a family home (for services, evaluation or meeting) should only take what is necessary for the visit. Limiting the materials and equipment includes considerations such as but not limited to:
   1) No external case for laptop or tablet;
   2) No purses and/or other bags;
   3) Utilizing a clipboard for signatures on forms (Service Encounter Verification Log, etc.)
   4) Using technology and email to provide resources instead of paper brochures and progress information.

B) The practice of bringing the same toys or other materials (“toy bags”) into multiple homes has the potential to transmit COVID-19, and therefore until further notice is strictly prohibited.

C) Required specialized manipulatives needed to administer the Battelle Developmental Inventory-2, may be brought in the home provided they are cleaned and sanitized between each use by the administering evaluator using a disinfecting product known to be effective against COVID-19. The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maintains a list of products known to be effective. [https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19)

D) NJEIS personnel should have cleaning/disinfecting supplies readily on their person to clean commonly touched surfaces and their own supplies such as laptops and pens.

E) Supplies should minimally include:
   1) hand gel,
   2) germicidal wipes,
   3) alcohol wipes,
   4) soap & paper towels,
   5) small trash bag

F) At the conclusion of each daily session, the practitioner must wipe down personal materials that will be taken with them (laptops, pens, etc.) with germicidal or alcohol-based wipe prior to leaving the family’s home.
VII) Social distancing
A) Practitioners and families will maintain social distancing (6-feet), to the extent possible, that still allows for the delivery of NJEIS services and activities, including evaluations and meetings.
B) Social distancing measures include:
1) Limiting the number of individuals participating in the service (direct therapy) to 3: the child, the adult caregiver and the practitioner.
2) Utilizing Coaching practices with the child’s caregiver to provide guidance for the caregiver to carry out strategies with the support of the practitioner in the home.
3) Alternative modes of service delivery, for example one visit is in-home the next is by telehealth.
4) Utilizing outdoor space for NJEIS therapeutic activities to the extent possible, when using that space can address the targeted outcomes and goals.
5) Utilizing telehealth/technology for interpretation services to limit the number of participants in the home at one time.
6) Conducting two-person (2) person evaluations with 1 practitioner in-home, and 1 via telehealth, and/or utilizing 2 different times for the practitioners to administer their portion of the evaluation.
7) Conducting Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and other meetings in locations that provide for social distancing for the number of participants at the meeting, and/or with other participants attending via telehealth or telephone.

VIII) Pre-visit Health screening – Practitioners
A) NJEIS personnel preparing to provide services to children and families (including evaluations and meetings) must do a daily self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms.
B) Upon arrival to the location the practitioner must inform the family that he/she has met the safety health check that day.
C) The safety check requires the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a temperature of 100.4 or higher today?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you or any household member have any signs of illness, such as cough,</td>
</tr>
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<td>shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste/smell?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you or any household member traveled to a State or country that has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a mandated quarantine in place by the Governor of NJ within the 14 days prior to today?</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Have you or any member of your family been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet cleared to discontinue isolation?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
IX) Pre-visit Health screening – Families

A) Prior to visiting a family’s home, the practitioner must ask the family to conduct a self-check for anyone who will be present for the delivery of services, including the child and other members in the household.

B) The safety check requires the following:

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C) If the answer to any of the above is “yes” services will not be provided at the home for that session. Telehealth service may be provided as an alternative.
GOVERNOR MURPHY APPROVED IN-HOME SERVICES
TARGET DATE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

Governor Murphy and the DOH have assessed and determined that the NJEIS practitioners may return to providing services in family homes and other natural environments beginning September 1, 2020. The public health status in NJ has improved to allow for providers to return to in-home services with protocols for safeguarding both families and staff. The DOH may reverse the decision to provide in-home services, if the public health status changes and if advised by the Governor and/or Commissioner of Health.

WHAT’S NEXT?

The good news is NJEIS has been preparing for this next phase for several weeks and collaborating with stakeholders to move forward.

_EIPs and SCUs and practitioners should not interpret the allowance of the return to in-home services to mean all services and updates and IFSPs etc. are expected to be updated or in place by September 1._ This is not a “return to true normal”, we are adding back services that take place in the home back into the options for families. Service Coordination and providers know those families who are anxious for an in-person visit, and those that are doing well and content with their current methods. As with all processes related to doing “good EI” the primary focus is to assess family’s concerns and priorities and routines and create _individualized_ family service plans.

ZOOM CALL FOR THE NJEIS

Monday August 24 at 11am.

Your invite will follow this dashboard communication
Communication to families will occur through a “Letter to NJEIS Families”

1. Posted in English and Spanish on:
   a. The DOH/NJEIS website
   b. The family portal on PCG website
   c. The Family Matters Website
2. Mailed to families with the EOB for August (mailed September 2)
3. Provided to SCUs and EIPs to share with families.
4. A shareable social media banner is in draft.

The DOH has the approved safety protocol training for ALL NJEIS personnel to complete prior to providing services in-homes. The training is being provided via the “GotoTraining” platform and be an on-line only training.

NJEIS personnel:
- Must complete the training prior providing any in-home service.
- Must attest at the conclusion of the training the following:
  - I have completed the NJEIS Safety Training: Protocols for Resuming In-Person Visitation with Families online tutorial in its entirety.
  - I fully agree to adhere to all safety precautions outlined in the training.
  - I understand and agree that it is my professional responsibility to stay current on all public health mandates issued by the Governor and his representatives, as well as all DOH-NJEIS guidelines.
- DOH will provide agencies with updated lists of practitioners who have completed the training.

THE FOLLOWING DATES/TIMES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE TRAINING SCHEDULE

- **WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26** 10AM
- **THURSDAY AUGUST 27**, 6 PM
- **SATURDAY AUGUST 29**, 10:30 AM

REGISTRATION INFORMATION IS FORTHCOMING.
A NOTE ABOUT THE ESTABLISHED SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The documents, safety training and attestation forms and all related safety policies and procedures for in-home visits:

- Were drafted by a stakeholder committee from NJEIS providers and;
- Designed to balance between safety, practicality and IDEA compliance.
- Were reviewed, amended, adjusted, approved and signed off by:
  - 2 physicians within Family Health Services and;
  - DOH Communicable Disease Service and;
  - Deputy and Commissioner of Health offices and;
  - Office of Legal and Regulatory Services in DOH and;
  - Office of the Attorney General and;
  - Office of the Governor

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT – PPE

DOH is pleased to announce that approval has been given to provide stipends to EIPs for the purchase of PPE (masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies) for families and practitioners who are in-person with families.

These one-time funding allocations:

- Will be determined by DOH and based upon agency size by practitioner enrollment,
- Will be added to EIP accounts through PCG, (date TBD)
- Will require EIPs to ensure that these funds include availability to provide PPE to families who are in need in addition to their practitioners, and
- Will require submission of receipt to the DOH for “proof of purchase” demonstrating funds were spent for the intended purpose.

DOH will provide each EIP a letter with your stipend amount and the parameters for accepting the stipend prior to distribution of funds.

UPDATED POLICY AND INFORMATION

The policies reviewed in the beginning of August and dated August 1, are in effect. Reports from the field indicate there was confusion about implementation date. As of now, these policies have no expiration date as we continue to navigate in changing times. Rates will remain at the home rates for all services and meetings.
BILLING FOR “STANDBY”

Practitioners may continue to enter an “IFSP” meeting for their time spent in maintaining the cancellations/missed services in the EIMS through August 2020. This practice expires on September 1, 2020.

QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONS AND MORE QUESTIONS

One constant phenomenon in the NJEIS is the unending supply of questions. Uncertain times and increased anxiety have increased those questions 10-fold from practitioners.

Some questions are appropriate for DOH to take responsibility for answering. Things like: Provider rates, assignment policy, standard safety protocols and consideration of make up services.

Other questions are the purview of Agency administration

- What happens if I get sick? How will my agency handle this situation?
- What if I don’t want to work in someone’s house?
- Will you give me PPE?
- How do you log if you choose to use a park backyard, playground instead of home?

Lastly, there has been a large amount of question related to clinical service provision and “how do I do my job under these circumstances” questions. The professional practitioners working in the NJEIS are responsible to review and revise their own intervention skill set to accommodate the new parameters which includes social distancing and mask wearing. There are professional organizations (ASHA, APTA, ECTA, Zero to Three etc.) that are providing and creating meaningful supports for professionals related to these new times in service provision. DOH will not be providing “answers” to these questions, however, the TTA at the REICs are able to provide community of practice opportunities for practitioners who would like a forum to address these clinical topics. Agency administrators and clinical supervisors should consider round-table discussions or targeted TA to practitioners struggling with these questions.
One of the frequently asked questions is related to “bringing bags” into the home. The protocol states that practitioners should only bring what is necessary. However, attendees have interpreted this to mean they can’t take anything into the home like their inhaler, or cell phone, or laptop, or small bag with their pens/hand sanitizer etc. Practitioners concerned about the protocol, should review the information again and heed the “absolutely necessary” clause.

The use of TOY Bags that travel from home to home is:

1) not good EI
2) a recipe for spreading germs.

Practitioners who struggle with the inability to provide services without their “trusty toy bag” should seek professional support from colleagues, supervisors, or national resources about the use of objects in the natural environment and providing routines-based services to meet the outcomes identified on a child’s IFSP.
El éxito de la respuesta del estado a Covid-19 ha permitido a los residentes de Nueva Jersey continuar reanudando más y más actividades diarias con precauciones. El Sistema de Intervención Temprana (NJEIS, por sus siglas en Ingles) se complace en proveer la siguiente información actualizada sobre el estado y los planes para la prestación de servicios de intervención temprana en los próximos meses.

P: ¿Existe un plan para reanudar los servicios necesarios en el hogar para los niños en la intervención temprana?

R: El Gobernador Murphy y la Comisionada de Salud han determinado que los servicios de intervención temprana pueden ser reanudados para niños y familias en el hogar.

P: ¿Podré continuar con las visitas de Telesalud/vídeo cuando se reanuden las visitas en persona?

R: Si, las visitas de Telesalud han sido una opción para NJEIS desde el 1 de abril de 2020. Muchos profesionales y familias han reportado la implementación exitosa de estrategias y objetivos de terapia usando telesalud en todo el estado. Las familias deben sentirse seguras de continuar con esta opción para todos o algunos de sus servicios. Hay un número limitado de agencias de intervención temprana que tienen una ubicación alternativa, basada en su centro, que también puede ser considerada para los servicios. Los padres deben sentirse cómodos en sus decisiones sobre la ubicación y la frecuencia de sus servicios.

P: ¿Qué pasa con las reuniones del Plan Individual de Servicio Familiar (IFSP, por sus siglas en Ingles)?

R: El NJEIS está alentando a que todas las reuniones continúen siendo mantenidas por teléfono y/o plataformas de video en este momento. Alternativamente, el NJEIS recomienda que no más de 3 personas participen en persona, a menos que la ubicación de la reunión pueda acomodar el distanciamiento social de 6 pies para todos los participantes.

P: Cuando un proveedor viene a mi casa, ¿se me pedirá que use una máscara? ¿Usara el proveedor una máscara?

R: Sí. NJEIS debe hacer todo lo posible para asegurar la seguridad de miles de niños, sus familias y practicantes en todo el estado. Mientras que las guarderías de niños, oficinas o escuelas se pueden mantener a las regulaciones de salud, los hogares de la familia no lo son. Esto significa que todas las familias tendrán que hacer su parte y aceptar los protocolos requeridos por el Departamento de Salud para los servicios que se proporcionarán en su hogar. Los adultos y los niños mayores de 3 años deberán usar una máscara, lavarse las manos regularmente antes y después de las sesiones, limpiar juguetes y otros objetos y pasar un cuestionario de salud diaria. Los profesionales de NJEIS seguirán los mismos procedimientos y requisitos al proporcionar su sesión.

P: ¿Qué viene después?

R: Su coordinador/ra de servicio y practicante(s) pronto se comunicarán y mantendrán una conversación con usted sobre las preocupaciones, rutinas y prioridades de su familia y harán cualquier ajuste al IFSP de su hijo(a) según sea necesario.

En nombre de nuestros coordinadores de servicios, profesionales, administradores y personal estatal, el liderazgo del Departamento de Salud desea agradecer a nuestras familias de intervención temprana por ser flexibles y pacientes durante estos últimos meses. Esperamos estar en persona con su hijo(a) y su familia muy pronto.
The success of the state’s response to Covid-19 has allowed New Jersey residents to continue resuming more and more daily activities with precautions. The Early Intervention System (NJEIS) is pleased to provide the following updated information on the status and plans for providing early intervention services in the coming months.

Q: Is there a plan to resume needed in-home services for children in early intervention?
A: Governor Murphy and the Commissioner of Health have determined that in-home early intervention services can resume for children and families.

Q: Will I be able to continue with Telehealth/video visits when in-person visits resume?
A: Yes, Telehealth visits have been an option for NJEIS since April 1, 2020. Many practitioners and families have reported successful implementation of strategies and therapy goals using telehealth throughout the state. Families should feel confident in continuing with this option for all or some of their services. There are a limited number of early intervention agencies that have an alternative, center-based location which may also be considered for services. Parents should feel comfortable in their decisions about the location and frequency of their services.

Q. What about IFSP meetings?
A: The NJEIS is encouraging that all meetings continue to be held by telephone and/or video platforms at this time. Alternatively, the NJEIS recommends that no more than 3 people participate in person, unless the location of the meeting can accommodate social distancing of 6 feet for all participants.

Q: When a provider comes to my home, will I be required to wear a mask? Will the provider wear a mask?
A: Yes. NJEIS must take every effort to assure the safety of thousands of children, their families, and practitioners across the state. While childcare, offices or schools can be held to health regulations, family’s homes are not. This means that all families will need to do their part and agree to the protocols required by the Department of Health for services to be provided in their home. Adults and children over age 2 will be required to wear a mask, regularly wash their hands before and after sessions, clean toys and other objects and pass a daily health screening. NJEIS practitioners will follow the same procedures and requirements when providing your session.

Q: What comes next?
A: Your service coordinator, and practitioner(s) will soon reach out and have a conversation with you about your family’s concerns, routines, and priorities and make any adjustments to your child’s IFSP as needed.

On behalf of our service coordinators, practitioners, administrators and state staff, the leadership at the Department of Health would like to thank our early intervention families for being flexible and patient over these past few months. We look forward to being in-person with your child and family very soon.
Lista de Verificación de pre-Visita de la Intervención Temprana de Nueva Jersey

Fecha de hoy: ______________________________

En respuesta a la pandemia COVID-19, el Sistema de Intervención Temprana de Nueva Jersey (NJEIS, por sus siglas en Ingles) está tomando mayores precauciones para disminuir la propagación del virus y al mismo tiempo proporcionar apoyo y servicios de calidad a nuestros niños y familias. Para proteger la salud y el bienestar de los niños y las familias a nuestro cuidado, junto con la precaución por la seguridad de los profesionales de NJEIS, NJEIS ha implementado este Formulario de Sesión Diaria para ser utilizado y firmado antes de cualquier servicio, evaluación o reunión proveído por NJEIS que se proporcione en persona en su hogar u otra ubicación de la comunidad. Las familias deben completar este formulario para cada practicante y cada visita (terapia, evaluación o reunión). Las familias y los profesionales están obligados a responder a todas las preguntas con "NO" para que se proporcionen los servicios de NJEIS. Como alternativa, se pueden proporcionar servicios de telesalud si las preguntas del cribado que están a continuación indican un riesgo de transmisión del COVID-19. El NJEIS se compromete a hacer todo lo posible para satisfacer las necesidades de nuestras familias y agradecerle de antemano por su cooperación y cumplimiento.

Autocomprobación diaria del practicante y certificación de la información

Nombre de la/el Practicante ______________________________

**Preguntas de examinación**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pregunta</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>¿Tiene usted hoy una temperatura de 100.4 o superior?</td>
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<td>¿Tiene usted o algún miembro de su hogar algún signo de enfermedad, como tos, dificultad para respirar, escalofríos, dolor muscular, dolor de garganta, pérdida de sabor/olor?</td>
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<tr>
<td>¿Ha viajado usted o algún miembro de su hogar a un estado o país que tenga una cuarentena obligatoria por parte del Gobernador de NJ dentro de los 14 días anteriores a hoy?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>¿Está usted o algún miembro de su hogar bajo evaluación de COVID-19 (por ejemplo, esperando los resultados de una prueba viral para confirmar la infección?)</td>
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<td>¿Ha Sido usted o algún miembro de su hogar diagnosticado con COVID-19 y aún no ha sido autorizado para interrumpir el aislamiento?</td>
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Firma de la/el practicante ____________________________________________

Autocomprobación familiar y certificación de la información

Nombre de Familia/Niño/Niña_________________________________________________

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Firma de padre/madre/tutor legal__________________________________________

August 14, 2020
New Jersey Early Intervention System Pre-Visit Checklist

Today’s Date: __________________________

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) is taking increased precautions to lessen the spread of the virus while providing quality support and services to our children and families. To protect the health and well-being of the children and families in our care along with concern for the safety of NJEIS practitioners, NJEIS has implemented this Daily Session Screening Form to be used and signed prior to any NJEIS service, evaluation or meeting being provided in-person in your home or other community location. Families are required to complete this form for each practitioner and each visit (therapy, evaluation or meeting). Families and practitioners are required to answer all of the questions with "NO" for NJEIS services to be provided. As an alternate, telehealth services may be provided if the screening questions below indicate a risk of COVID-19 transmission. The NJEIS is committed to doing everything possible to meet the needs of our families and thank you in advance for your cooperation and compliance.

Practitioner Daily Self-Check and Attestation of Information

Practitioner Name __________________________

<table>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you or any member of your household under evaluation for COVID-19 (for example, waiting for the results of a viral test to confirm infection?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you or any member of your household been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet been cleared to discontinue isolation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Practitioner Signature ______________________________________________

Family Self-Check and Attestation of Information

Family/Child Name __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Screening Questions</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you, your child, or any family member have a temperature of 100.4 or higher today?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you, your child, or any household member have any signs of illness, such as cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste/smell?</td>
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Parent/Legal Guardian Signature ____________________________________________

August 14. 2020