



**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>

**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>
  - 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>
- 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 ad 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:

|   |
|---|
| <i>Do you have a temperature of 100.4 or higher today?</i>  |
| <i>Do you or any household member have any signs of illness, such as cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste/smell?</i>             |
| <i>Have you or any household member traveled to a State or country that has a mandated quarantine in place by the Governor of NJ within the 14 days prior to today?</i> |
| <i>Are you or any member of your family under evaluation for COVID-19 (for example, waiting for the results of a viral test to confirm infection?)</i>                  |
| <i>Have you or any member of your family been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet cleared to discontinue isolation?</i>   |

**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:

|   |
|---|
| <i>Do you have a temperature of 100.4 or higher today?</i>  |
| <i>Do you or any household member have any signs of illness, such as cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of taste/smell?</i>             |
| <i>Have you or any household member traveled to a State or country that has a mandated quarantine in place by the Governor of NJ within the 14 days prior to today?</i> |
| <i>Are you or any member of your family under evaluation for COVID-19 (for example, waiting for the results of a viral test to confirm infection?)</i>                  |
| <i>Have you or any member of your family been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet cleared to discontinue isolation?</i>   |

- 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.