

# Protecting children during COVID-19

## Tips for social workers and social welfare practitioners

### #7 – Virtual Monitoring

Monitoring of children and/or adults at risk within their home or in residential care facilities is a particular challenge when it is not possible to visit the home or facility, for example during COVID-19 containment.

**Vulnerable children and families need monitoring by social workers even more under such circumstances.**

**There are things you can do to monitor their situation virtually, through phone contact or use of social media, and help ensure that they stay safe and healthy.**

#### **Frequency of virtual monitoring:**

- Adults and children in their home: depending on the risk status of the child, call daily, twice weekly or weekly calls to monitor their status
- Weekly calls to Residential Care Facilities (manager/social worker)
- Calls or WhatsApp messages with partners and services when the need arises

Next: -What does virtual monitoring involve?  
-How to monitor virtually?



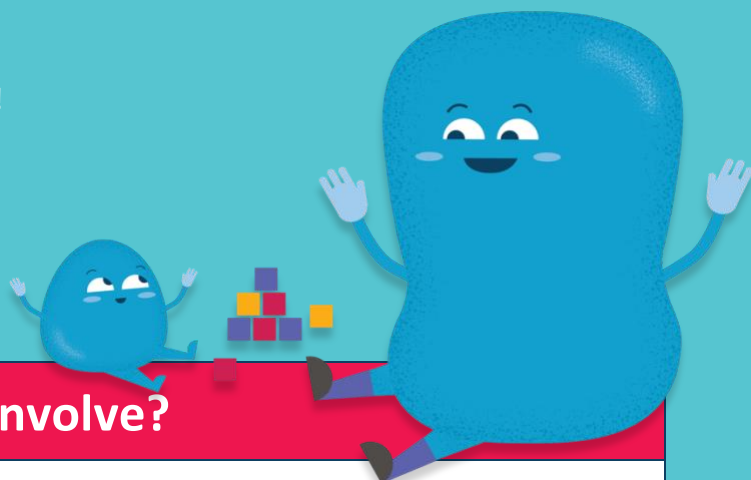
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Thank you for continuing to support children and families in need, even in these difficult times. You are heroes.



## What does virtual monitoring involve?

- Provide COVID-19 awareness raising via phone or internet by communicating basic messages on signs and symptoms, hygiene measures and social distancing, health referral pathways and hotline numbers
- Encourage caregivers to promote children's emotional wellbeing by talking to them about COVID-19, mitigating their stress, using positive parenting techniques, continuing school at home, home activities, and scenario planning for families in the event a caregiver falls ill
- Provide children with clear, child-friendly, gender- and ability-sensitive messages about COVID-19, including proper handwashing, wearing face masks and social distancing. Use video clips for younger children to illustrate the right way to handwash and social distance
- Deliver simple messages to reassure children and help caregivers appropriately respond to the informational and emotional needs of children
- Provide psychosocial support to children, especially to those who are totally confined to one room
- Ask the family to share whether they are receiving support or assistance from any other organisation or service
- As part of the first contact with a caregiver, work with them to outline and plan alternative care solutions for children that may be needed if they fall ill, are quarantined, hospitalized or worse. For example, encourage them to think of a family member or friend who could come and stay with the children or take the children in.
- Ensure that you maintain confidentiality when making a phone call, by making phone calls away from other adults as much as possible and not using speaker phone
- Complete case file records for all phone or virtual meetings with children, adults and family members, and make a note of others giving any type of assistance to the family



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## Calling children and their caregivers

**Frequency** will depend on the risk status of the child:

- daily if the child is at immediate high risk
- twice weekly calls if there are risks but they are not immediate
- weekly for children at medium risk

**What to ask about and how to support:**

- Ask about the status of all family/household members
- Use the case plan to ask whether and how agreed-upon case plan actions have been achieved
- Provide simple guidance on COVID-19 infection prevention, signs and symptoms, and emergency numbers
- Provide basic psychosocial support (see # 3 Tip for Psychosocial Support): listen, encourage
- Provide guidance on managing stress and mental health (see # 4 Tips for Managing Stress and Mental Health)
- Provide guidance on staying safe if there is a risk of violence (see # 5 Tips for Staying Safe When there is a Risk of Violence)
- Ask if anything new has come up, either practical (struggling to pay the rent or buy food) or family dynamics (finding a partner's behaviour stressful) and make needed referrals
- Assess for and make needed referrals



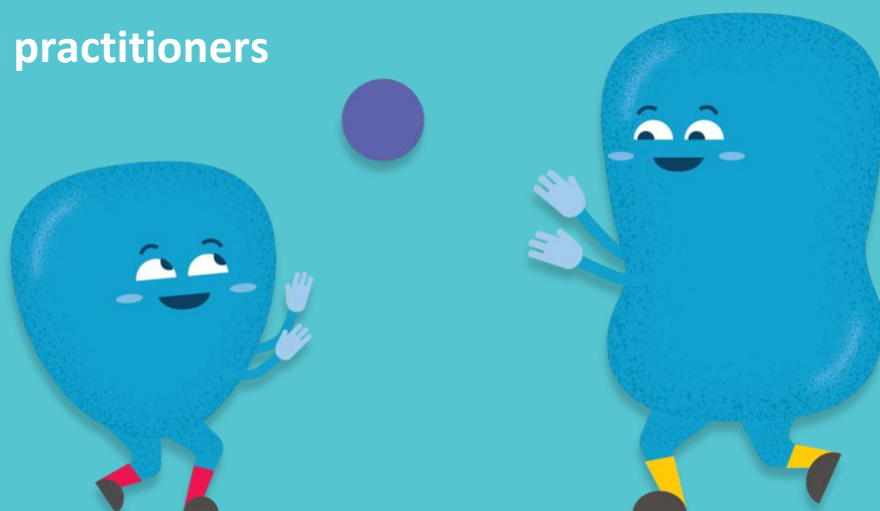
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## Monitoring residential care facilities

**Weekly** monitoring calls to the manager and/or social worker of the residential care facility

### Ask and assess:

- Ask for an **update on entry and exit of children**, their names, how the transition was managed including preparation and follow up of the child and family, how social/child care workers and community leaders/local authorities in locality of family have been involved in transition and follow-up
- Check in about **regular supplies** of the facility, especially water, sanitation and hygiene, educational and recreational supplies
- Assess for **child protection issues**

## Calling or WhatsApp messaging with partners and services

**Who:** local and national government partners (on a need basis), child protection and other relevant (health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, protection, shelter) coordination mechanisms, civil society networks and local authorities/community leaders

### What about:

- Updates on actions they are taking to protect families and children
- Report / follow up any child protection issues
- Review, update and synchronize key messages
- Identify needs for additional support
- Identify possible linkages, collaboration opportunities and coordinate efforts

