ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES
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FIELD GUIDANCE – Rev. May 11, 2021 (Originally Posted May 6, 2020)

RE: Field Guidance #5, Home Study/Post Release Services COVID-19 Practice Guidance - Update

On May 6, 2020, ORR issued guidance to grantees and contractors on conducting home studies (HS) and post-release services (PRS) virtually or in-person, based on state COVID-19 guidance and restrictions. This field guidance updates the previous guidance and provides a phased-in approach to resuming normal ORR HS/PRS operations that adhere to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidance; reflect current state guidance; and are in the best interest of the child. This guidance is in effect until further notice.

Note that ORR is eliminating the temporary waiver process whereby ORR HS providers could request a waiver to conduct virtual home studies in lieu of in-person home studies.

Scenario 1: For states that require domestic home studies to be conducted in-person, ORR HS *and* PRS providers must conduct in-person home studies and offer in-home PRS.

Scenario 2: For states that allow virtual domestic home studies due to COVID-19 precautions, or for states where no official guidance has been issued, ORR HS *and* PRS providers have the discretion to offer virtual or in-person HS/PRS services, based on the best interest of the child. **No waiver is needed to conduct virtual HS/PRS.**

Note for HS Providers: If the ORR Federal Field Specialist (FFS) determines that an in-person home study is necessary for the safety and wellbeing of the child prior to release, the ORR HS provider is required to conduct an in-person HS visit, as indicated in the Release Request.

The ORR/FFS will weigh the reason for the home study (e.g., the child has been a victim of sexual abuse versus the child has a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act) with the potential health risks of conducting an in-person home visit. The FFS may decide that an in-person home study is required, depending on the circumstances of the child and potential sponsor (e.g., to corroborate information gathered during the sponsor assessment process). The FFS must make a determination on the format of the home visit within one business day of the home study recommendation and document the determination in the Release Request.