

Virtual Home Visiting 104: Facilitating Parent-Child Connections

Parent-child interaction: *Any moment of shared attention between a parent and child. This includes how the child experiences the parent, how the parent experiences the child, and how those experiences impact the relationship. PCI takes place during playtime together and everyday routines.*

Where:

- **Family Environment.** Encourage families to set up the visit where the child is comfortable. Work with the family ahead of time to decide where they all feel most comfortable with virtual visits.

When:

- **Playtime interactions in both real time and previously** to promote parents' reflection of their children's development and skills, as well as their own behaviors and skills as a parent.
- **Routines and everyday activities**, adapting your visits to the family schedule when possible.

Who:

- **Device/camera angle.** Have the family adjust the device so it captures everyone on the screen (at least for part of the time).
- **Reminder to move the device as needed.** For conversations with the parent, close up is fine. For PCI, the camera should be positioned four to six feet away from the parent and child to provide a broader view.
- **"Take me with you."** Encourage the parent to take the device if the child leaves the room.
- **Other family members.** Gently remind the parent at the start of or during the call that other family members are welcome to join or rejoin the session.
- **FSP family considerations.** Your own personal and family needs may occur during visits. Think through what could happen and let the family know what you may do when it does.

Why:

- **Development and relationship patterns** continue regardless of family circumstances and ongoing situations.
- **Pivot discussion towards parent child interactions and child development.** Without disrespecting or disregarding what's going on with the family, transition toward engaging parents in being fully present and aware of their children.
- **Listen to the context and content of the family's story**, then ask questions such as, "How do you think this situation is affecting Jose?" or "Have you noticed any changes in Maria since this happened?" These are ways to bring the child into the conversation so that parenting can be supported.
- **Connect a goal to bring the focus to interactions.** "It's really hard for you right now to manage the kids, the house, and being pregnant. I know you care deeply for your kids, so let's make sure we spend a few minutes

together interacting with them and focusing on their development. Deep breathing can be a great way to help re-focus our mind and body. Let's take a few deep breaths together and then try out the activity."

How: Supporting Parents During a Virtual Visit:

- **Norms of the experience.** Knowing what to expect helps family become more comfortable
 - **Screen as a window** into the family's home
 - **Device out of anyone's hand**, propped with a broad angle is preferred
 - **Parent and child interact with each other** and not as much with the FSP on the screen
 - **Children can move about the space** so encourage the family to take the device if they change location
 - **To minimize self-conscious reactions**, encourage the family to close self-view
- **Lighthearted moments** help with self-regulation and reduce self-consciousness
- **Plan structured check-ins and reflections to discuss** what's working and what's not working, technology, timing, length of visit, etc.
- **Create space for interaction through use of pauses and quiet.**
- **Relieve the pressure of performance** by focusing on the shared experience, not accomplishing a task.
- **Observe and comment**, just as you would in an on-ground visit.
 - **Positive parenting strategies** - "I notice that you smiled at both of your children when they were playing together so they know you like it when they do that."
 - **Parent's interests and ideas** - "I notice you enjoy cooking. What cooking activities have you tried with your child?"
 - **Parent's values** - "I noticed that you redirected him from hitting his brother. It seems important to you that they learn to get along with each other."
 - **Parent knowledge** - "It's interesting that you notice your child putting words together because that's an important change in language development."
 - **Verbal Video** - Encourage the parent to parallel talk, describing what they see, hear, and feel in the moment.
 - **Prompts to encourage parent descriptions**
 - "What are Tanisha's hands doing with the blocks? Have you noticed her doing this before?"
 - "What is Malik doing with the cars? How is he using his body? Have you noticed him doing this before?"
 - "What do you think they'll do next?"
 - **Coach parents through your observations**
 - "Sounds like Tanisha and Malik's play caused Tanisha to get upset. Dad, how would you describe it?"
 - "I noticed how you quickly tended to Tanisha's emotions. Take the time you need with her to help."

Supporting Parent Child Interaction Outside of the Visits

- **On phone calls, ask a variety of questions to explore current and recent parent child interactions:**
 - What are some things your family enjoys doing together?
 - What have you noticed about your child's language development?
 - How do you feel about how your child is developing? What do you think is the most important thing for her to learn?
 - What are other things you do to help your children learn to get along?
 - What's fun for you to do with your kids?
 - I notice that you enjoy cooking. Have you tried doing cooking activities with your child?
- **Guided discussion prompts to think through possible responses.** Encourage the parent to reflect on a way they interacted with their child, or even on a specific goal for interaction (e.g., responding to the child during play or a family routine, like meal time).
 - Let's say that you're trying to get dinner ready and also trying to text back your supervisor at work, and you have your child wanting your attention. How might you respond?
 - What about if you're working from home and your child comes to play with her toys next to you. What might you do?
 - What about if you are making the bed [insert any other chore that's applicable like doing laundry, or washing dishes] and your child comes and pulls the sheets/pillows off the bed or hands you the pillows. How might you respond?
 - Let's say you hear your child crying from another room in the house. How might you respond?
 - What about if you're busy making dinner and your child comes running to you and hugs your legs. What might you do?
- **Open-ended and reflective experience** remains a tool in this work and can be used to support PCI.
- **Parent might send email/text/voicemail** updates between sessions about interactions.
- **Parent may share their thoughts and observations** about interactions or continued activities between visits.
- **FSP might share worksheets and resources**, or check in between sessions.
- **The FSP might take a screenshot** of an interaction to share with the family or the family may video an interaction or activity to share with FSP.
- **Summarize the parent's response or dialogue.** This will help them to hear their thoughts and know you are seeking to understand.

Resources

- Module Resources
 - Learning Guide - [Handout](#)
 - Turning Attention to PCI in a Difficult Situation - [Handout](#)
 - Virtual Vitality
 - Centering Practice: "I am here, I have arrived" - [Video](#) and [Handout](#)
 - Hot Cocoa breathing - [Video](#) and [Handout](#)