



COVID-19 Guidance for Home Visits, Inspections, and Other Field Work

The following procedures are in addition to any universal policies or requirements set by another private or public agency, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), the City of Boston, or the State of Massachusetts and are intended to protect the health and safety of the staff and the clients they serve.

Pre-Assessment of the Visit

Prior to conducting any home visit, inspection, or similar face-to-face work with clients, the staff person should review the need for the activity with their supervisor and receive approval for the activity. Use of technologies such as telehealth should be utilized whenever possible.

Workers themselves should also answer the screening questions listed below prior to making any visit.

Pre-Screen the Client/Setting

Prior to conducting the visit (the same day if possible, but certainly within 48 hours of the visit) the staff person should contact the client and complete the following telephone screening questions:

1. Do you or does anyone in your household currently have any of the following symptoms:
 - a. New (started within the last 3 weeks) cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - b. A fever of 100 ° F or higher or feel feverish
 - c. Recent (started within the last 3 weeks) loss of taste or smell
 - d. Chills
2. Have you or anyone in your household had those symptoms (new cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever of 100 ° F or higher, feel feverish, or new loss of taste/smell) in the past 3 days even if you/they don't have those symptoms now?
3. Have you or anyone else in the household received a positive COVID-19 test result within the last 2 weeks?
4. Have you or anyone else in the household been in close contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 2 weeks?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “yes”, the home visit or inspection should be rescheduled for 1 week later or whenever the individual or family completes any required quarantine or isolation period. This telephone screening should be repeated prior to the rescheduled home visit. Please also ask if the person/family is connected to health care. Advise to consult with health care provider as appropriate. Document reason for declination of visit appropriately.

When the visit is confirmed, the staff person should remind the client that the client and all other members of the household present during the visit will be required to wear a face covering or mask for the duration of the visit.

Personal Protective Equipment and Measures at the Visit (minimal standards)

For their own safety and that of their clients, all staff conducting home visits/inspections must follow these requirements. If proper PPE is not available, the visit cannot occur.

- Always wear a mask during the home visit. A disposable medical mask or cloth face mask is recommended for most home visits. Don the mask before arriving at the site.
- Shoe covers and gloves (if deemed necessary) can be donned upon arrive at the site. In general, gloves do not need to be used if proper hand hygiene is followed.

- Clinical staff who must provide hands-on care during the home visit must wear gloves and a disposable gown in addition to their mask.
- Individual programs may require additional PPE depending on the activity.
- Upon arrival at the site, remind the client that they and all members of the household present must wear a mask or face covering, for the duration of the visit. If it's not possible for household members to wear a face covering or mask they should stay in a separate room. Consumers should be encouraged to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before, during and after interactions.
- If permitted by family, staff should wipe down any hard surface (the table/chairs before and after meeting).
- Do not make physical contact with any other person unless necessary to perform tasks related to the home visit such as medical screening performed by a nurse. If contact occurs, wash hands (or use hand sanitizer) before and after the contact. Do not touch your face, eyes, or mouth while at the site. Do not eat or drink anything during the visit.
- Keep a minimum distance of 6 feet from all other individuals unless closer interaction is absolutely needed to complete tasks related to the home visit. This distance should be estimated by the staff member performing the home visit. For example, when inspecting a room, the client should remain in the doorway or an adjoining room rather than in the room with the inspector.
- Upon completion of the home visit, once outside, remove and discard the used disposable PPE in a trash bag taken to the site for that purpose and clean hands with hand sanitizer. Don fresh PPE as appropriate.
- Follow good hand and respiratory hygiene at all times of the day:
 - Avoid touching face/eyes/nose/mouth with unwashed or gloved hands.
 - Wash hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if washing with soap and water is not possible.
 - Wear a cloth face covering or face mask when in public or interacting with other people.
 - Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue and wash your hands after disposing of the tissue or cough or sneeze into your elbow/arm if a tissue is not available.
 - Do not report to work or conduct home visits if you feel ill or have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.
 - Avoid handling paperwork during the visit, if possible.

Care of equipment

Disposable equipment should be used if possible. All non-disposable equipment should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes after use between clients (examples include baby scales, blood pressure monitors) or alcohol wipes (stethoscopes). Staff are advised to use gloves when handling/cleaning equipment. Always wash your hands after removing gloves. Where possible, any supplies provided to clients during home visits should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes at the time they are given to the client or the client should be advised to clean them prior to handling/use.

Client Education

Provide all clients with information on COVID-19 and best prevention practices (hand washing, physical distancing, etc.) in their preferred language at every home visit. Approved multilingual fact sheets are available to download from www.bphc.org.

