

It may bring comfort to know what specific things your provider (audiologist, health care clinician, early intervention specialist, etc.) is doing to keep you and your baby safe. Your provider may also ask you to take certain steps to keep them and their staff safe. Many providers are calling families prior to their appointment to discuss safety.



# Emerging Solutions: How to Keep You, Your Baby, and Your Provider Safe During COVID-19

## Staying Safe During Your Appointment

During the call with your provider, consider asking:

- 1 If doing a hearing screening only, do you have screening options other than us entering the building (e.g., screening in car)?
- 2 If there is paperwork to be filled out, can you send it to me ahead of time?
- 3 When I arrive, are there specific instructions (e.g., phone before I enter the building)?
- 4 Is there a limit to who can come to the appointment with me and my child?
- 5 Is there a limit to the number of people who can be in the waiting area?
- 6 Are there health screenings (e.g., temperature) of patients upon arrival?
- 7 How are public areas being cleaned (e.g., waiting rooms, restrooms, food service areas) and how often?
- 8 How do you screen yourself or staff for wellness (e.g., temperature)?
- 9 What protective gear (e.g., gloves, masks) does the provider and his/her staff use?
- 10 How is equipment (e.g., screening, diagnostic) cleaned or replaced between patients?
- 11 If you will be talking directly to my child, do you have a face mask with clear plastic so that my child can see your face/lips?
- 12 How can I help keep you and your staff safe?
  - Would you like me to wear a face mask?
  - If the clinic serves both sick and well patients, how will you handle that?
  - Anything else?

We went to the audiologist at our CI Center last week, and I've been **VERY** anxious about COVID. It was a **VERY** comfortable experience!!! The CI Center called us when they were ready to re-open. They were very transparent about the new policies (masks, temp checks, etc.) and wanted me to know that I could cancel at the last minute if I wasn't comfortable. There was no waiting room—only waiting in the vehicle was allowed. There were cones lined up in the parking lot with phone numbers and spot numbers on them. You let them know what spot you were parked at, and they came out, with PPE on, with extra masks if we didn't have any. They took our temperatures and asked us some questions. They gave us hand sanitizer, and we went into the appointment. **LOTS** of sanitizer was used by the audiologists, and everything that was touched was thrown away or set aside for sterilization. We didn't need to check out. Everything was done over the phone after the appointment. It was a **LOVELY** experience for this COVID-anxious mama!

—Michelle Thomas, Parent, Michigan

## If You Decide to Cancel or Reschedule

Even though your provider is taking steps toward safety, if you still do not feel comfortable with an in-person appointment, you may want to think about and/or take action in the following ways:

- 1 Have you talked to your provider about:
  - Your safety concerns?
  - Additional safety strategies that would make you more comfortable to attend an appointment?
- 2 Would it help to talk to another parent who has recently had the experience of an in-person appointment?
- 3 If you plan to cancel or reschedule, and you have an appointment scheduled, please call and let your provider know at least 48 hours in advance (or within the timeframe outlined by your provider). Not showing up impacts the schedule of the provider and his/her staff.
- 4 If you plan to reschedule your appointment:
  - Ask your provider how far out they are scheduled.
  - Have you balanced your concerns with safety with the amount of time that will pass until you are able to be seen by your provider?
  - Does the delay in going to the appointment impact the services your child needs?
- 5 Ask your provider if they can do a video visit by a secured system.

## Additional Resources

- <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/53087-Need-to-see-a-hearing-care-specialist-during-the-pandemic-things-to-keep-in-mind>
- <https://www.asha.org/News/2020/Early-Intervention-and-COVID-19-Advice-for-Parents-of-Children-Ages-0-3-Whose-Services-Are-Interrupted/>
- <https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/topics/fam-fam-support/need-support.html>
- <http://www.handsandvoices.org/fl3/topics/tipsheets.html>
- <http://www.infantheating.org/COVID-19/index.html#support>

The development and distribution of this material was supported in part by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as part of award U52MC0439, totaling \$3,400,000; and as part of award 2UJ1MC307480400, totaling \$1,800,000. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, or the US Government.