

# Parent-Child Interaction Webinar Discussion and Ideas

## How can I engage parents in PCI when there are bigger stressors they may be dealing with during this time?

Just like on-ground visits, transitioning to PCI during a virtual visit can be a challenge when the family is navigating a difficult situation or stressor. Strong emotions accompany difficult situations. As family support professionals, our job is to help the parent think through the situation, share appropriate resources and encourage positive parent-child interactions.



Before thinking through some possible steps to supporting the family through a challenging situation and encouraging PCI, consider why shifting focus from the challenge to PCI can be so hard.

- Parent may be experiencing a high level of stress in particular, given the current (and historical) trauma related to racism, health, finances, childcare, etc., and leaving a crisis without full resolution feels insensitive. We may want to fix things.
- FSP's role in observing and reading those cues of discomfort may be more challenging virtually. The things we typically hone in on (tone of voice, specific statements) may be hard to see or hear.

However, knowing that child development does not stop during difficult times and believing that all parents want the best for their children, our role is to help them learn strategies to parent and cope in the midst of whatever life throws at them. We must work toward parental resiliency and attachment.

The following steps might be helpful:

1. Address the issue (as appropriate to your role).
2. Use reflective questions and motivational interviewing techniques to work toward solutions.
3. Share resources as appropriate.
4. Transition to positive parent-child interaction.

**\*\* If a parent presents with a true mental health crisis, such as suicidal or homicidal thoughts or believing they are in danger, then that's a different situation. Follow your agency's procedure for handling a mental health crisis.**

**Challenges to PCI the Field Has Encountered During a Virtual Visit**

- Multiple children/distractions in background
- Children tend to get distracted with seeing themselves on screen; play with the device they are on
- Families' stress
- Connectivity issues
- Lack of internet services
- Older children wanting to engage during visits

**Strategies from the field to pivot discussion toward PCI and child development**

- Ask open-ended questions
- Reflect on what is happening and what you are seeing during the home visit
- Question of the day
- Engage families in role play
- Active listening and empathy
- Review milestones with parents
- Use books, music and toys to actively engage
- Share curriculum goals and activities
- Use prompting questions
- Build on connections happening real-time
- Positive reinforcement

**Find the positives in this new way of delivering services**

- Parents are finding opportunities for additional virtual connections, such as parent cafés, parent groups, yoga classes and music groups.
- Additional family members can now participate in the visit.
- Families are consistently keeping scheduled visits, so rescheduling is not happening.
- Parents are taking on more of a lead during the visits, feeling empowered.
- Children are eager to participate and connect with their home visitor.

***While we all know that virtual connections are quite a different way to deliver home visiting services, please remember you are all doing a wonderful job! The value and the importance of the work you do with families is immeasurable!***