



COVID-19 Guidance: January 2022

Updated guidance in response to Omicron variant surge

Given current COVID disease prevalence, rapid spread and high transmissibility of the Omicron variant, and increased exposures over the holidays, FCI strongly supports the temporary return to virtual-only visits as sites evaluate local trends and safety.

Updates on Omicron and vaccination:

- Omicron is more contagious than other variants of Covid-19.
 - Up to 3x more contagious per CDC reports
 - Transmitted with less exposure time than other variants
 - May be transmitted even if a person is vaccinated and asymptomatic
- Vaccinations are demonstrated to help prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death.
 - The majority of the individuals in communities across the country who are hospitalized, in the intensive care unit, and on ventilators are unvaccinated. In some communities, this has been 90-100% of ventilated patients who are unvaccinated.
- Vaccinations and boosters are available for all ages 12+ (Pfizer only for children)
- Vaccinations (Pfizer only) are available for children 5-11 year old children
 - Boosters have been recommended by the FDA for children 5-11 yo who are also immunocompromised.

Masking/ PPE:

- Given the increased contagiousness of Omicron, if sites wish to continue any in person contact with families, they will need to ensure that nurses have access to and are required to use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as defined by CDC and Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).
- This would include using BOTH mask (surgical, KN95, or N95) AND eye protection (goggles or faceshield).
- **Cloth masks alone are not adequate protection against the Omicron variant.**
- Any family member present who is older than two years of age is advised to wear a double-layered mask with a surgical mask or KN95 being preferable.
- When possible, any child under the age of two (with exception of the infant) should not be present for the home visit, given concerns with the ability to socially distance and inability for the child to wear a mask.

Model Delivery:

- Site decision to return to virtual services or to continue hybrid approach would be made by local health authorities and home administrative organization (for example, state DHHS, local health department or hospital) weighing risk of in-person service delivery to families and nursing staff alike.

- FCI strongly recommends that community advisory boards and case conferences be held in virtual format.
- Family Connects Community Alignment Specialists are strongly encouraged to be in regular communication with their community partners delivering services to families, particularly high-use or frequent referrals, about any changes in their capacity to provide services due to impacts of this current surge. FC nurses will need to be alerted to these service availability changes to ensure families are connected to the right resource.
- If a site chooses to have in person contact with families, they must adhere to the following:
 - Availability and Requirement of PPE (as above)
 - Ability to provide six feet minimum social distancing during visit
 - Appropriate sanitation practices
 - Bring into the home only what is needed
 - Disinfect all equipment (including pens, BP Cuffs, Scales).
 - Dispose of single-use items (gloves, disposable BP cuffs).
 - Hand hygiene practiced before, after, and throughout visit.
 - Nurse supervisor attests to competency of all nursing staff in performing physical assessment while adhering to appropriate infection control measures.
 - Maintain symptom screening with [CDC screener](#) for BOTH nurse and family
 - Nurses must screen negative daily
 - Nurse must screen family by phone on day of scheduled home visit
 - Family must screen negative to receive in-home assessment:
 - **Sites may consider asking vaccination status of caregiver and other family members who may be present during home visit to determine risk assessment.**
 - Sites wishing to return to home who have not completed the return to home Qualtrics should do so: https://duke.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6hZgHScjbUYe6ma
- FCI strongly recommends that any nurse who is performing in-home visits should be completely vaccinated against COVID-19, including the booster per CDC recommendations (with any of the vaccinations authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration).
- FCI encourages review of local disease prevalence when determining appropriateness of returning to home.
- This guidance is subject to change based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- For additional information regarding consent and gradual return to home, please reference [FCI COVID guidelines: June 2021](#).