Meaningful Child and Family Engagement and Interaction to Account for Attendance

As your program staff are hard at work embracing the transition to remote learning and finding innovative ways to keep our children and families involved in the learning process, we want to provide you with additional guidance on remote learning structures and protocols for monitoring regular child and family engagement and interaction.

Goals

The goals for monitoring child and family engagement and interaction are:

- Maintaining frequent contact with children and families to ensure participation and engagement
- Ensuring the right supports get to the right children and families at the right times
- Monitoring children's general well-being and escalating concerns to program leaders

Expectations

Program staff are expected to have at least two interactions with each family in their class each week. Child interaction is defined as, but not limited to:

- Phone, email, and/or other digital communication with a family member
- Phone, email, and/or other digital communication with a family member and their child (example: a parent and child participate in a brief virtual meeting with the child's teacher)
- Digital sharing of completed activities by families
- Supporting families in creating a daily routine/schedule or other direct family contact in support of a child
- Other evidence of participation as determined by the program leader or the Division of Early Childhood Education

We encourage leaders and teaching teams to refer to the following resources already shared in the Bulletin for suggestions on how to meaningfully engage children and families. Please note that we do not expect that children are engaged with their teachers for 6 hours and 20 minutes each day.

- Remote Learning Guidance in 3-K and pre-K includes suggestions about meaningfully engaging with families and children remotely.
- Guidance for Families During COVID-19 Closures has suggestions on speaking with children about COVID-19, self-care tips for adults, and suggestions/resources for establishing routines and supporting positive behavior.
- Activities for Learning at Home for Early Childhood lists many fun, free activities for families to do at home with their children Birth-5 years old.

NYCEECs with EarlyLearn contracts (center-based)

- Programs with EarlyLearn contracts (center-based) that were using Pre-KIDS (Vendor Portal) to track on-site attendance during the school year should refer to the instructions listed under “Tracking for NYCEECs”.

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• Programs with EarlyLearn contracts (center-based) that were using WES to track on-site attendance during the school year should expect additional guidance and instructions from our division over the next few weeks for tracking remote learning interactions with children and families.

NYCEECs with 3-K/pre-K contracts

Beginning this week (the week of April 20), NYCEECs with 3-K/pre-K contracts will be tracking attendance through Pre-KIDS (Vendor Portal). In order to do this please use these instructions:

• Under the “Student Attendance” tab, for each day of operation and enrolled child, select the type of interaction with the child or their family by selecting one of the options available in the drop down menu (P1 through P7). Do not select “P/in person learning student present.”
• The other codes (absence codes and transfer code) have been kept unchanged.
• If a child is enrolled and attending at a REC or ECC or other alternative arrangement, use P8: Alternative setting
  o Note: due to recent technical updates to the portal, the option “P8: Alternative setting” might become visible to some vendors only after Tuesday, April 21. If that option still does not appear in the drop-down menu after that date, please contact your Pre-K/3-K Operations Analyst.
• If a child participated in more than one type of interaction, select the primary method of engagement.

Support for NYCEECs

If you have questions about remote learning, please contact DECEInstruction@schools.nyc.gov. If you have technical questions about using Pre-KIDS, please contact your Pre-K/3-K Operations Analyst. If you need technical support using WES/ACCIS, please contact WESHelp@schools.nyc.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions for NYCEECs

1. How can my program track child interactions and participation during remote learning?

   Programs should consider the existing outreach tools they have and begin to use those to track interactions/attendance (e.g., calls to/from children and families, surveys, email correspondence, family project submissions etc.). In each program, teachers and leaders should be able to interact with all of the children and families that they would regularly see if learning were not occurring remotely. All programs should take regular attendance.

2. Will tracking of family engagement have any effect on my monthly payment from the DOE?

   As you are aware, pre-K/3-K vendors are required to submit monthly attendance as part of their monthly invoicing in order to receive payment. This requirement will not change. Programs are
expected to submit their monthly attendance utilizing the new interaction codes as appropriate. Failure to use the appropriate interaction codes and simply marking students “present” may result in delays in payment. The information collected in PreKIDS will be used to track child and family interactions in remote learning for the purposes of ensuring child well-being and following up with families.

3. What should I do if I cannot reach a child or family?

City residents are facing a wide variety of challenges relating to the current health crisis, and there are a number of reasons why a family may not be able to engage in remote interactions. The safety of families and children is of utmost importance. However, lack of contact with a family, in and of itself, does not necessarily reflect the presence of a safety concern. Please consider the following:

- Is the child/family in question receiving child welfare services?
- Was there anything in the program’s prior interactions with the child to suggest that they could be at risk while at home?
- Was there anything in the program’s prior interactions with the child’s family to suggest that the child could be at risk while at home?

If the answers to any of the abovementioned questions are yes, please consult the steps outlined under question 4.

We recommend that teaching teams work with each family to establish scheduled times to engage either via phone, email or video conferencing. If the teachers are consistently unable to connect with the family or child during agreed upon times, the teacher should reach out to the family each day thereafter until contact is made, to better understand the reason for the missed interaction, and adapt accordingly.

You and your staff should also consider using alternative emergency contacts, or other outreach tools, in an attempt to contact unresponsive families. A log must be kept of all outreach and communications made to families regarding absences. Programs should keep records of reasons for children’s absences from participation.

Your DECE social worker can offer you suggestions and serve as a thought-partner if you are having consistent challenges. If your program does not have an assigned social worker, reach out to the DECE Mental Health and Wellness team at DECEMHW@schools.nyc.gov for support.

4. What should I do if I cannot reach a child or family receiving child welfare services, and/or I think a child’s safety may be at risk?

The DOE continues to require more frequent touch points with children and families receiving child welfare services. These situations include:

- Children for whom the parent/legal guardian has been the subject of a report made by your program to State Central Register (SCR) and the case remains open;
- Students for whom the parent/legal guardian has been the subject of a report made by your program to SCR and the case was substantiated; and
- Students in foster care.

Accordingly, your program must make a minimum of three attempts each day to contact the family. Teaching teams should proactively confirm expectations for remote interactions, define alternative emergency contacts as needed, and flag for the family’s assigned Child Protective Services (CPS) worker if you are unable to establish contact.

If you don’t know the family’s assigned Child Protective Services (CPS) worker, contact the ACS Office of Safety First at 718-KID-SAFE or via safety.first@acs.nyc.gov to request their name and contact information, as well as the information for the CPS supervisor.

Additionally, all program staff are mandated reporters for child abuse and maltreatment and, as such, staff must make a report to the State Central Registry for Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) when they have reasonable cause to suspect that any child is being abused or maltreated. Child welfare cases aside, lack of contact with a family, in and of itself, does not necessarily reflect the presence of a safety concern.

To make a report, the mandated reporter must call SCR at 1-800-635-1522. While on the phone with the SCR representative, in addition to providing information about the alleged child abuse or maltreatment, the mandated reporter must ask for the “Call I.D.” number. The “Call I.D.” number must be retained and used by the mandated reporter to complete both the New York State Office of Children and Family Services Form LDSS 2221-A.