




## Planning and Conducting Outdoor Visits with Families

Visits with families often occur in locations physically outside of their home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, public health nurses shared their experiences of working with families in different contexts. This resource summarizes their tips and strategies for conducting safe, productive, and engaging outdoor visits with families.

**Outdoor visits with families can occur on driveways, during a walk, at a park, or other public outdoor spaces.**

**Outdoor visits can contribute to many positive outcomes for families.**

- ✔ Maintaining a safe physical distance
- ✔ Reducing transmission of respiratory viruses
- ✔ Maintaining privacy and confidentiality for clients who live with multiple people (e.g., in a group setting), who are precariously housed, or who are “couch surfing”
- ✔ Promoting healthy behaviours through role-modeling (e.g., walking to increase physical activity)
- ✔ Providing opportunities for health teaching (e.g., child safety at a park; sun safety; healthy child development)
- ✔ Prioritizing client, child, and nurse safety (e.g., avoiding surveillance from a violent individual in the home)
- ✔ Setting personal (e.g., increase physical activity) or parenting goals (e.g., teaching toddler to kick a ball at the park) that include time outside. Varying the location of the “home visit” may also promote family retention and participation in the visit



**When it's possible offer families a choice on “where” to visit. Client participation and engagement in home visiting can be enhanced through an offer to meet in a safe and family-friendly space outside the home.<sup>1</sup>**

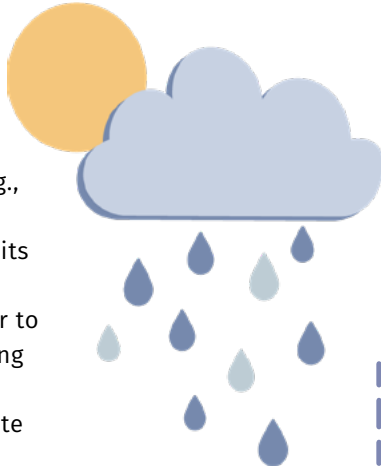
### **Intimate Partner Violence Consideration:**

Nurses may use the outdoor environment to privately and confidentially assess for or provide a nursing intervention in response to a client's experiences of intimate partner violence.



## WEATHER

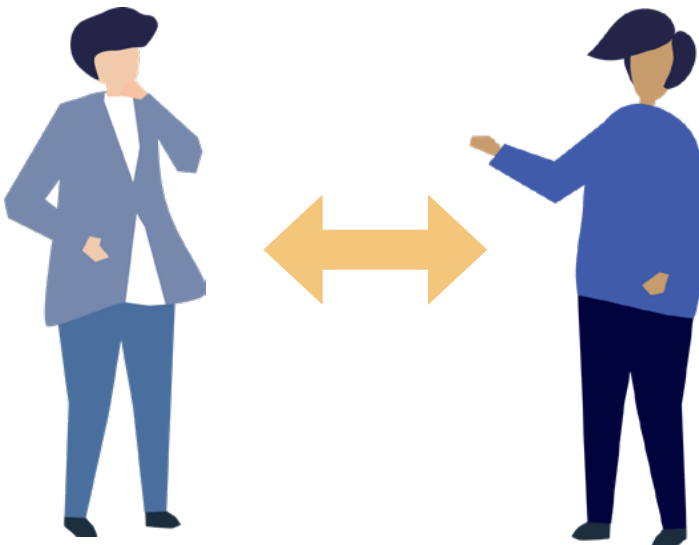
The outdoor temperature should be comfortable (e.g., not too hot or cold). Limit when possible outdoor visits in inclement situations. Checking the forecast prior to the visit and communicating a back-up plan with the client may avoid last minute cancellations.



**Practice tip:** Keep two umbrellas in your car! These are handy for protection from sun or rain on a driveway visit. A folding lawn chair in the trunk might be handy too!

## ABILITY TO MAINTAIN DISTANCE

When physical distancing is necessary during the visit, ensure that the outdoor area being used can accommodate the necessary space for all of the people present during the encounter. If seated in an outdoor area, check that the chairs are movable and can be placed far enough apart. If the visit will happen during an outdoor walk, check to ensure that the path is wide enough to maintain a safe distance.



## SAFETY OF CHILDREN

Some outdoor environments can create challenges in conducting the nurse-client encounter. For example, busy toddlers at a park may require constant oversight. It may be more effective if another caregiver is present to observe and interact with the toddler while the nurse engages with the client. In all situations, safety of the children should be assessed.

**PRACTICE TIP:** Strollers, infant carriers, or other baby products (e.g., bring the exersaucer out to the driveway), may be effective to ensure the child's safety and parent's comfort during encounters. When calling or texting to confirm a visit, provide the client with some ideas on what to bring outside for the visit (e.g., chairs, safe place for child, toys) and instructions for PPE use. Provide clear expectations to the family.



*I will text you when I arrive at your house. I will wait outside on your driveway for you to come out. Don't worry if it takes a few minutes, I know it can take some time to wrap baby up.*



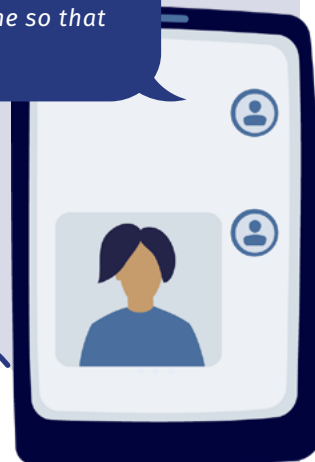
## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):

Expectations towards wearing PPE may fluctuate during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic era. Prior to the encounter, communicate PPE requirements for the nurse, client, and anyone else who will be present at the visit, including that a COVID-19 screen may be necessary immediately prior to the time of the visit. Sending a photo of yourself ahead of time helps to establish a connection, so that the family can “see” what you look like without PPE.



So that you know what to expect, our current health unit policy about PPE is...

Hi, I'm Sam, your Public Health Nurse. I'm looking forward to meeting you tomorrow. Here's a photo of me so that you know what I look like.



### PRACTICE TIP:

Keep yourself safe and healthy by wearing appropriate footwear during a walking visit. Having a pair of sneakers and socks handy can make your visit much more comfortable.

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## PRIVACY

Outdoor in-person visits can offer an opportunity for the client to disclose sensitive information without other people being present. However, it is important for nurses to protect the client from potential breaches of privacy. Physical distancing often means speaking in louder voices; informing clients of the potential of neighbours (or others) overhearing the conversations is of high importance.



<sup>1</sup>Tirilis, D., Yao, M., & Chang, D. (2018). Engaging high risk families in home visiting programs: A rapid review. Region of Peel.

**Citation:** Campbell, K., Strohm, S. & Jack, S.M. on behalf of the PHN-PREP Project Team (2021) Tips for outdoor in-person visits (<https://phnprep.ca/resources/outdoor-visits-with-families/>). School of Nursing, McMaster University.

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