# Using Zoom for a virtual visit for parent and child interactions

The general description below is offered by the Clearinghouse to discuss with your local experts and team. There is currently no research to dictate what is best practice for virtual visits.  (updated 4-1-2020)

## Steps to prepare

1. All parties must thoroughly familiarize themselves with Zoom (or some other online platform) in order to conduct a virtual visit. Several test-runs should be attempted before any real visit.
2. The visitation program must purchase a subscription. The version offered for free does not have all the same features as the subscription. For example: the option to record visits is only offered on the purchased version of the application.
3. Supervisors must let the visiting parents and custodial parents know they are being recorded before the visit begins.
4. The visitation program staff must be familiar with the risks in each case.
5. The staff must also be thoroughly trained in safety issues.
6. The visitation program must conduct an intake interview with the custodial parent and visiting parent to ensure parents know how to connect to Zoom and understand its limitations as well as to agree to all of the safety restrictions established by the program.
7. Visits in the morning before 10:30 and after 5:30 will be clearer and have less electronic glitches caused by a crowded internet.
8. The monitor should have a plan for the visit, depending on the child's age and any special issues. Generally, younger children will have shorter attention spans. So they can have more frequent visits.
9. All visiting parents should be provided with help to engage their child during the visit time. This includes suggested activities, games, etc. to use when the visiting parent needs assistance. The Clearinghouse has created multiple handouts by age group to provide to parents. Talk to the visiting parent about this. At first, the visiting parent may reject such assistance. But as time goes by, it may become difficult for her/him to come up with things to talk about.
10. Among the features that need to be enabled and disabled, supervisory staff should be aware of the following
    a. Turn off the screen sharing
    b. Turn off chat function
    c. Turn on the control that allows the monitor/supervisor to put either party on hold during the visit. This allows the monitor to speak directly and privately to only one party.
    d. If either party needs to speak to the supervisor directly, the supervisor can use the "HOLD" option to speak to whomever they need in a private manner.
    e. Turn off sharing of phone numbers, locations and IP addresses for all parties participating.

f.  Custodial and visiting parents are to join the video through an email link sent to them separately, as to prevent the sharing of the parties' information between them.
g.  Child (with assistance of custodian) joins 5 or 10 minutes before the dictated time to allow the custodial parents to prepare the electronics and the child.
h.  **After the child and custodial parents have joined, the supervisor sends the link to the visiting party.**
i.  Supervisor can change their background so neither party can see where they are.
j.  If the visiting parties have any safety concerns they can change their backgrounds as well.
k.  Backgrounds can be changed by all parties while using their mobile phone, laptop or desktop computer.
l.  Supervisor needs to remain vigilant and listen to everything being said and watch the visit.
m.  If parent needs to be redirected the monitor/supervisor can mute the parents to prevent the child from hearing them.

**Other considerations**

- Custodial parents and supervisors will have more control during the Zoom visits than during in-person visits. For example, supervisors and custodial parents will be able to hear what the child and parents are saying.
  o  Custodial parents should be asked to allow the child to wear headphones (earphones) which can prevent the custodial parents from hearing what the visiting party is saying.
- **There is no way to prevent parents from taking screenshots of the child or using the features on their cell phone to record the audio portion of the visit. However, you can make it clear to the parents that it is prohibited.**

**Orientation information**

1.  Programs can tell custodial parents that children cannot move around the house because the environment has to be controlled. Same with the visiting parent. That is up to the program.
2.  Both parents must be informed that no other person can be part of the chats OR on the screen.


**Procedure:** Before visit, Monitor sends link to custodial – custodian sets up visit – monitor then sends link to connect visiting parent – visit is closely monitored – monitor disconnects call at end of visit.

*The reason the link is sent at the last minute to the visitor is to keep the visitor from hearing the custodian preparing the visit.*