



Child Protection Services: Choosing Modality

Area of intervention

General guidance

Key objectives

To propose key questions to ask while choosing services modality

Audience

Managers & Supervisors & Coordinators

Face-to-face vs remote services?

Given the current risks of in-person contact, there is a need to **determine when in-person contact is critical** to the protection of children and their families. Assessment of the **risk of staff transmission of or exposure to the COVID-19 virus** must be balanced against the **severity of the risks facing particular children and their families**.

A number of questions may help you in determining the most appropriate modality:

- *Is there total or partial confinement in the country? Are social services and CP case management services considered essential?*
- *What is the level of risk for the child? (review case prioritization: low, medium, high)*
- *Are there community volunteers or community case workers having continued, trusted and safe access to children and families?*
- *What are the urgent needs and tasks requiring in-person support?*
- *What is the level of exposure/transmission risk to the COVID-19 virus?*
- *Is it possible to conduct in-person support, keeping social distancing (1-2 meters) and hygiene measures?*
- *Is the staff comfortable with doing frontline work? Are they or their relatives at risk? Have they received appropriate information regarding risks and health prevention measures?*



VS



Ethical considerations

You are responding to **extraordinary circumstances** and normal practices may not be always feasible. What are our ethical obligations when we are not able to provide services in our usual ways? Find below some ethical challenges and questions that may arise from those extraordinary circumstances and new ways of working:

- Not increasing **inequalities**: *What about instances where there is no access to technology? Are we providing remote support and follow up only for those who have access to technology? How can we ensure overcoming barriers to reach the most vulnerable remotely if they do not have access to same technology? (providing means of communication when possible, increasing community-based support when feasible and safe for all...)*
- Working with **community volunteers**: *If conditions do not allow to have face-to-face visit by CP staff for safety reasons, can we decide to involve community volunteers (considering the same reasons why safety could not be ensured for staff)? what guidance do they require/ need to be able to provide safe and confidential support?*
- Maintaining **confidentiality**: *if we can't ensure it, is it best to not do it at all?*
- Maintaining clear and appropriate **boundaries**: *should I use my personal devices or account? should I provide services on evenings when beneficiaries are available?*

In any case, it is important, first and foremost, to ask ourselves what we can do to **minimize the risk of harm** to our beneficiaries, to ourselves, and to our practice settings. In the midst of those tensions, you should **strive to maintain the ethical principles** of service, respect for the dignity and worth of all people, professional competence, integrity, human relationships, and social justice.

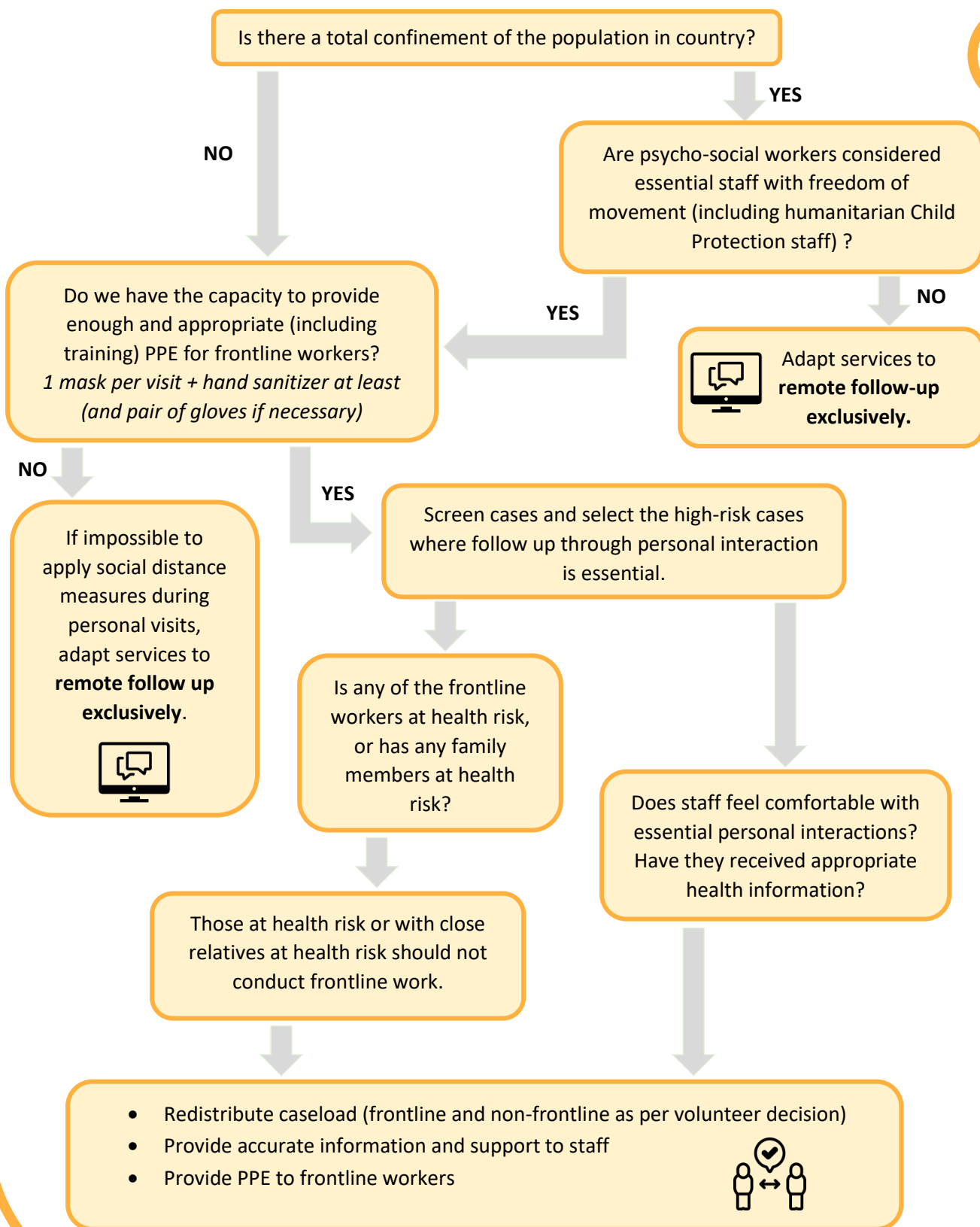




Decision Flowchart



The flow-chart below aims to **illustrate how you can use the questions** above through **potential scenarios** within child protection interventions during COVID 19, when social distance is not possible or if supporting children and families directly affected by the disease.



Find more details for Case management in [this guidance](#).



Which technology?

Here are some steps you can use while choosing the technology that best fits the needs and the context you are in:

Assessing the context



- Who is your audience ?
- What is your objective ?
- Is your audience literate ? Is your audience digitally literate ?
- What modes of communication and sources are available to you and your audience?

Assessing the communication landscape



- What modes of communication and sources does your audience rely on?
- Do people own, or have access to, mobile phones or other communication hardware?
- Can they afford to use mobile phones (e.g. cost of calling/data)?
- Do people have access to a source of power to keep devices charged?
- Is there connectivity in your target area?

Assessing the operational feasibility



- Does the platform/technology offer the utilities you need (video, chat, recording, etc...)?
- Is the platform/technology easily accessible to your audience (free, easy to log in, etc..)?
- What barriers might exist for people to access the digital service?
- Which types of platform/technology is your agency banning or allowing?

Assessing the data security



- Does the platform/technology require to create a user account? (*minimize data collection*)
- Are the data kept safely (where)? Can you delete data exchanged?
- Do all services provided remotely need the same level of security?

Recommended platforms (GDPR compliance): Encrypted such as Email, Teams and Skype for business...

Specific considerations

Informed consent

Explain and obtain verbal informed consent from the child and guardian to receive support through remote modality and document it in the case file. The **following topics should be addressed** to ensure the beneficiary can provide informed consent:

- length and regularity of the call ;
- what happens if the technology breaks down ;
- professional boundaries ;
- emergency contact ;
- data protection (collection and sharing)



Data protection

General principles should apply but extra care should be in place because of platforms privacy and data collection policies.

- **Minimize** Incidental Data Collection ;
- **Collect Only** the information you need ;
- **Pay attention** to which documentation you collect/save/share, depending on the platform/tool (secure or not) and on the device (personal or professional);
- **Be Cautious** when requiring beneficiaries to set up user accounts.



Useful links

<https://www.communityengagementhub.org/guides-and-tools/hotline-in-a-box/>

<https://www.techsafety.org/choosing-a-platform#platform-top%20/>

You can find other info sheets of this series in the different sections of covid.chilhub.org