

## **Support for Video-Conference Contact Between Parents and Children**

### 1 *Review of Literature*

2           Research has demonstrated that video-chat's visual aspect allows for essential elements  
3 of nonverbal communication, including facial expressions and gestures, as well as allowing for  
4 the surrounding physical context of the conversation to provide support and therefore is a viable  
5 approach for maintaining remote relationships between babies, children, and adults (McClure &  
6 Barr, 2017; McClure, Chentsova-Dutton, et al., 2017; Tarasuik, Galligan, & Kaufman, 2011;  
7 2013). Because it allows for non-verbal and environmental cues, this form of communication,  
8 while not meant as a complete substitute for in-person visitation, is developmentally appropriate  
9 alternative to traditional telephone use for young children, even those as young as 6-months  
10 (Ballagas et al., 2009; McClure, Chentsova-Dutton, et al., 2017). Further, extant work has shown  
11 that toddlers are capable of not only learning from people they interact with solely on video-chat,  
12 but are also able to recognize people and objects from the video when seeing them in person.  
13 (Myers, LeWitt, Gallo, & Maselli, 2015; Roseberry, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2014).

14           The benefits of video-chat were demonstrated in laboratory conditions which confirmed  
15 that even very young children were as comforted by a parent on video-chat as when the parent  
16 was physically present (Tarasuik, Galligan, & Kaufman, 2011; 2013). Specifically, in their 2011  
17 work, Tarasuik and her colleagues provided empirical evidence suggesting that quality of the  
18 virtual presence is quite similar to a parent's actual presence and can, therefore, play an  
19 important role in the maintenance or formation of secure attachments when children are  
20 separated from their parents for various reasons. These findings were expanded in Tarasuik and  
21 her colleagues 2013 replication study which confirmed that children reacted more positively  
22 during video-chat than during audio-only contact and the quality of the interactions during video  
23 contact was comparable to when the parent was physically in the room. They posit that video  
24 provides a stronger sense of closeness and engagement than audio, thus making video  
25 communication a more beneficial tool for maintaining parent-child relationships during times of  
26 separation. Tarasuik and Kaufman (2017) affirmed through a qualitative study that video  
27 communication allows parents and children (even young children) to preserve a sense of  
28 continuity of relationship through a combination of face-to-face interaction and video-chat.

1 For example, Service Members' families have been utilizing video-chat platforms for at  
2 least the past decade to witness and participate in the birth of their children; to initiate  
3 relationships and familiarity with their infants, whom they have never met; and to maintain  
4 existing relationships with their young children (Chalmers, 2011; Yeary et al., 2012). Individuals  
5 who must travel, be placed remotely for work, or divorced parents use video-chats to maintain  
6 connections with their children (Meredith, Rush, & Robinson, 2014; Yarosh & Abowd, 2011).  
7 Incarcerated parents have access to video-chat services that include parenting education and  
8 reading to their young children. (Barr, et al., 2014; Brito, Barr, Rodriguez, & Shauffer, 2012).  
9 Family members can play games and read books across the miles through video-chat as a means  
10 to build and maintain connectedness (Costa, & Veloso, 2016; Follmer, et al., 2010).  
11 Additionally, video-chat allows a caregiver to see and hear both sides of the interaction, to  
12 provide scaffolding for the conversation, and to mitigate technical issues (McClure & Barr,  
13 2017; McClure, Chentsova-Dutton, et al., 2017).

14 The March 19, 2020, electronic edition of The Chronicle of Social Change  
15 ([https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/child-welfare-2/family-visits-are-an-essential-service-for-](https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/child-welfare-2/family-visits-are-an-essential-service-for-youth-in-foster-care/41525)  
16 [youth-in-foster-care/41525](https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/child-welfare-2/family-visits-are-an-essential-service-for-youth-in-foster-care/41525)) suggests using Virtual Family Time, which can include oversight by  
17 a support person or worker via a multiuser platform such as Zoom, CrowdCast, or Google  
18 Hangout. A user name can be created for the child and a virtual background in Zoom  
19 (<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/204674889-Zoom-Rooms-Customized-Background>) or  
20 by using an app such as Chromacam (<https://www.chromacam.me/#about>) which can be  
21 installed to assist in protecting the privacy of the foster parent, if concerns exist. For older  
22 children with verbal skills, telephone visits through a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) such  
23 as Google Voice, Grasshopper, OOMA, or the like. The Chronical also notes that for most  
24 children possible risks posed by screen or phone visits is likely to be minimal, and supervision is  
25 not necessary. Again, issues can be alleviated by providing parents with ideas such as reading  
26 books, playing together, singing, or dancing, as is developmentally appropriate and by  
27 prescribing specific times for video-chat and/or phone calls to occur. Calls should be of  
28 sufficient length as can be tolerated by the child and using a timer to indicate when the allotted  
29 time has been reached can help in alleviating any feelings of unfairness that may arise.

30 While a number of benefits exist for the use of video-chat between parents and their  
31 children, especially in light of current public health circumstances, there are limitations to video-

1 chat because most children under two are too young to intentionally establish a video call on  
2 their own, thus requiring the physical presence of another caregiver during the interaction. This  
3 may feel like an inconvenience or imposition for some foster providers, and could possibly be  
4 mitigated though some of the aforementioned strategies.



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