

# Using the PICCOLO or HOVRS Tools Virtually

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The PICCOLO and HOVRS are observational measures that are usually used face-to-face, but can also be used from a distance. Both tools can increase home visiting effectiveness at engaging caregivers and supporting caregiver-child interaction during in-person or virtual home visits. In fact, these tools are already being used in virtual home visits.

The PICCOLO, Parenting Interactions with Children Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes, is a tool for observing caregiver-child interactions. The HOVRS, Home Visit Rating Scales, is a tool for observing home visiting practices and engagement. Both were developed for observing either in person or from video. When you can't observe in person, here are some tips:

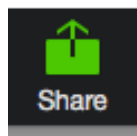


**1. Offer alternatives.** When in-person observations are not possible, offer each family alternatives so they can choose what works best for them. Barriers to in-person visits may include challenges that increase family stress, so be flexible and follow the lead of the family in exploring alternatives. Families may need tips and guidance for setting up a device for a virtual home visit. If one way of doing things doesn't work, try something else. Devices include desktop computers or laptops with a camera or a smart phone with a camera. For families that do not have these devices or do not have internet access, self-video followed up by phone calls with the family can be effective.

**2. Set up online video meetings or “tele-visits.”** Some families can access the internet with devices that have cameras, so virtual home visits can be conducted much like in-person home visits. [Zoom](#) may be the easiest system to use, but your organization may have [Adobe Connect](#) or [GoToMeeting](#). Other alternatives include [Skype](#) and [Google Hangouts](#).

For a PICCOLO observation, a home visitor can guide a caregiver to identify appropriate materials for the observation, including a picture book or a set of photographs to share, pretend play toys, and other toys the child enjoys sharing with the caregiver. Introduce and explain an online PICCOLO observation the same as for a regular home visit.

The home visitor can score the PICCOLO during the observation or record the online meeting for scoring later. If the observation is recorded, the home visitor can share their screen (on Zoom—just click “Share Screen”) to play back the video and give feedback describing the caregiver's strengths and how they help the child's development.





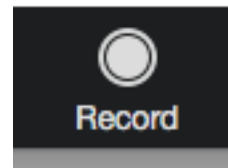
For a HOVRS observation, an online video meeting should be set to show both the home visitor and the family and can be recorded for a supervisor or coach to view later (on Zoom—click “Record”). Or, a supervisor or coach can join the meeting to observe the home visit “live,” introducing themselves but then keeping their microphone and video camera on mute. If the visit is recorded, a coach can show the home visitor the parts of the video with examples of the home visitor’s strengths.

**3. Ask for “self-video” and give feedback in phone calls.** In this case, the person being observed makes a video. Whoever is recording may need reminding: Keep the action in the frame, don’t point a camera toward a window or light, try to record in wide-screen (not the tall-narrow frame you use when talking on your phone), don’t cover the sound intake (usually on the bottom edge of a phone), and don’t put the device near anything that makes noise (refrigerator, washer, fan, open window, etc.). Score from the video and provide feedback in an online meeting, in a phone call, in an email, or in a printed message sent through the mail



For PICCOLO, a family could self-video using their phone or a video camera to record the mother and/or father interacting with the child. Ask for about 10 minutes of video, but let them know that even 5 minutes can be scored. If possible, return the video recording to the family so that during a feedback phone call, the family can find the places in the video that show their strengths for supporting child development.

For HOVRS, a home visitor could self-video an entire online home visit (on Zoom, click “Record”) or audio-record a phone-visit (with permission, put your phone on speaker and use whatever voice recording app is on your smartphone). For in-person visits, the home visitor should record at least 30 minutes. During a feedback phone call, the home visitor can watch the video or listen to the audio that shows their strengths for engaging the family in supporting child development.



**4. Try it out first.** Whichever option you choose practice it all first with a coworker. If you are working from home or office, check the background for your online meeting to make sure it looks ok. Identify a secure quiet space to have online meetings or to watch confidential video. Practice helping someone else check their own background to make sure it is okay, and guide them to find materials in their home for activities with young children. Practice recording just the family or both the family and yourself on the screen. Be patient about all of this—technology can be frustrating and takes some trial and error to get it right.