

# SoonerStart COVID-19 Re-Entry Plan



**OKLAHOMA**  
Education

Updated August 2021



## SoonerStart COVID-19 Re-Entry Plan

The SoonerStart Re-Entry Plan provides protocols for the safe delivery of early intervention services. These protocols align with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Oklahoma Department of Education (OSDE), and the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and intend to:

- Ensure equitable and appropriate services for SoonerStart families.
- Prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of families, children, and our workforce.
- Sustain our partnerships with families around their children's growth and development; and
- Support SoonerStart personnel to deliver early intervention services to children and families.

SoonerStart currently utilizes the Oklahoma COVID-19 Alert System, a four-tiered risk measurement tool with corresponding color categories that identify the current COVID-19 risk level, to inform service delivery options. Each Phase of the Re-Entry Plan outlines specific procedures for maximizing early intervention services while continuing to ensure the safety of staff and families.

The Oklahoma COVID-19 Alert System issues alert levels for each county every Wednesday based on data from the prior week. It is expected that county alert levels will change periodically dependent on COVID-19 transmission data. To maintain as much consistency as possible in providing services, SoonerStart staff will follow the requirements outlined in each of the Re-Entry phases when a county has remained the same risk level (color) for two consecutive weeks. (See Addendum – *Guidance for Continuing/Resuming Early Intervention Services When County Risk Levels Change*)

### UPDATE JUNE 1, 2021:

The Governor of Oklahoma lifted the COVID-19 state of emergency order in May 2021. Additionally, any building owned or operated by the state of Oklahoma that is opened to the public cannot mandate that face masks be worn to access government services, with the exception of certain medical facilities providing primary patient care. Local health departments are considered medical facilities.

## In-Person Staff Meetings

For [In-person meetings](#), all participants should follow the most recent CDC health guidelines. Participants should be aware of and implement [cleaning strategies](#) to maintain a healthy meeting environment. [Personal hygiene](#) protocols are recommended.

## PHASE I: VIRTUAL EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

**Trigger: Any county that is considered a “Orange” county in accordance with Oklahoma’s COVID-19 Alert system**

<https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/covid-19-alert-system>

During Phase I, early intervention services will be provided by telephone or video conferencing. Additional requirements may be implemented for SoonerStart staff who interact with other staff in an office setting.

Staff should not come to work in an office environment if they are experiencing:

- A temperature of over 100 degrees, muscle or body aches
- A cough, sore throat, or congestion
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Diarrhea, Nausea, Vomiting

Full or part-time telework may be approved on an individual basis depending on local office protocols or for staff who meet the criteria for at-risk personnel. Supervisors will audit staff for at-risk health conditions to make individualized decisions. The appropriate agency supervisor must approve alternative work locations.

When one cannot maintain social distancing, staff must wear face-coverings per CDC guidelines. Such areas may include areas such as restrooms, breakrooms/kitchens, or common areas. Face coverings are not required when an employee can adhere to social distancing protocol, such as working independently in an office.

Supervisors will audit office space to ensure adequate social distancing space is available or sufficient boundaries, such as high cubicle walls. Other alternatives may be considered, such as alternating staff office days or alternate desk location, et cetera.

All staff are to support the cleaning of commonly touched materials and surfaces in their work area, including:

- Door handles
- Light switches
- Desktops / tabletops
- Printers / Phones
- Kitchenette items

Staff who have had COVID-19 like symptoms as described by the CDC or have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to self-isolate at home and cannot return to the office or provide in-person services until:

- He/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without being given fever-reducing medications **AND**
- Has had improvement in symptoms **AND**
- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.

Staff who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 (within 6 feet of an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis) should self-quarantine for 14 days unless:

- They have had COVID-19 within the past three months or
- They are fully vaccinated (Two weeks post their 2nd COVID-19 vaccination).

Staff that can work while quarantined may continue to provide services through phone or video conferencing technology with their supervisor's approval.

## PHASE II: CONTINUED VIRTUAL VISITS WITH LIMITED IN-PERSON VISITS

**Trigger: Any county that is a “Yellow” county in accordance with Oklahoma’s COVID-19 Alert system**

<https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/covid-19-alert-system>

During Phase II, telephone or video conferencing services will continue as the default option for early intervention services unless:

- The family lacks the resources to participate in virtual visits, **OR**
- Services are not effective using teleconferencing methodologies.

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP Team) may consider all-natural environment settings based on the family/child's unique needs and safety of the family and staff. These settings may include virtual services, Health Department, contractor's office, childcare center, home, or alternate outdoor locations. SoonerStart staff will continue to wear a face mask and practice social distancing as much as possible when meeting in-person with families/caregivers during Phase II. Inside the child's home should be the last option considered if no other venues are appropriate.

Intakes may continue virtually during Phase II. However, if the Resource Coordinator determines that an in-person meeting with the parent is necessary, the in-person meeting should be scheduled in the Health Department setting or an alternate location where social distancing can be achieved. Face masks are required to be worn by staff.

Eligibility evaluations during Phase II may continue by virtual means with the use of the DP3. Should the evaluation occur in person at the local health department, a multidisciplinary team must complete the evaluation using either the BDI-2 or the DP3 and a second procedure to determine eligibility. In the event of an in-person evaluation, one must obtain signatures for all parental consent forms.

The Resource Coordinator will contact families that indicate they do not have the technology resources or that virtual services are ineffective to schedule an IFSP meeting to discuss service options, including possible face-to-face visits. ~~Please note that verbal consent during Phase II may only be used if there will be NO face-to-face interaction between SoonerStart staff and the parent/caregiver during the Intake, Evaluation, IFSP or Service delivery process.~~

**SoonerStart requires a parent/caregiver signature on all consent forms for screenings, evaluations, IFSP's, Medicaid Consents, Releases of Information, and Electronic Communication.**

SoonerStart will return to providing virtual services during any period that the family’s county of residence is at risk level Orange or Red (as indicated by the Oklahoma COVID-19 Alert System) if the family has agreed by selecting “yes” on the contingency statement in the child’s IFSP. If the family selects “No” on the contingency statement, SoonerStart staff will cancel the service visit until the county returns to yellow or green or an IFSP modification is complete.

## Procedures for In-Person Visits

### SoonerStart Staff

Before meeting with a family for a face-to-face in visit, the service provider (and RC, if applicable) must answer “no” to the following questions:

If you have not had COVID-19 in the past three months or currently not fully vaccinated:

- Have you had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- Are you currently ill? Do you have symptoms of a cold, cough, shortness of breath, chilling, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, congestion, sore throat, or a temperature of 100 degrees or more?
- Have you temporarily lost your sense of taste or smell?

Staff who have had COVID-19 like symptoms as described by the CDC or have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to self-isolate at home and cannot return to the office or provide in-person services until:

- He/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without being given fever-reducing medications; **AND**
- Has had improvement in symptoms; **AND**
- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.

Staff who have been in **close contact** with someone who has COVID-19 (within 6 feet of an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis) should self-quarantine for 14 days unless:

- They have had COVID-19 within the past three months or
- They are **fully vaccinated** (Two weeks post their 2nd COVID-19 vaccination).

Staff who are able to work while quarantined may continue to provide services through phone or video conferencing technology as approved by their supervisor.

SoonerStart staff should adhere to the following safety precautions during Phase II:

- Staff must wear a face-covering when meeting in-person with children and families regardless of the location.
- Staff must wash hands or disinfect hands immediately before and as soon as possible after visiting the family.
- In-person visits conducted at health departments will be in one designated room. Sanitation of the room should occur before and after every visit. In addition, staff should remove all unnecessary toys and items from the designated space.
- The provider will supply any items used during the visit. The provider will sanitize all items before and after each visit.
- Meeting at alternative service locations such as a public park or an outside space at the family's home is encouraged.
- If providing services in the family's home, participants should try to stay in one location in the home and be mindful of the surfaces and objects being handled or touched.
- Service Providers should utilize coaching practices to the greatest extent possible to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between yourself and the child or parent
- Staff should be aware of [CDC safety precautions](#) for direct service providers.

## SoonerStart Families

When scheduling the in-person visit, staff will ask the family:

- Have you or anyone living in your home had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- Are you or anyone living in your home currently ill? Do you or anyone living in your house have symptoms of a cold, cough, shortness of breath, chilling, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, sore throat, congestion, or a temperature of 100 degrees or more?
- Have you temporarily lost your sense of taste or smell?

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above questions, the in-person visit cannot occur. A virtual visit may be conducted if the family has agreed by selecting "yes" on the contingency statement in the child's IFSP. If the family selects "No" on the contingency statement, SoonerStart staff will cancel the service visit and reschedule.

SoonerStart family members who report having COVID-19 like symptoms as described by the CDC or have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to self-isolate at home and cannot receive in-person services until:

- He/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without being given fever-reducing medications;  
**AND**
- has had improvement in symptoms **AND**
- at least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.



Staff should advise SoonerStart family members to follow CDC recommendations for self-quarantining if those families report exposure to COVID-19 (within 6 feet of an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis). The state's contact-tracing procedures shall be followed concerning both isolation and quarantine, as indicated.

**\*\*\* SoonerStart staff should not ask about the vaccination status of family members. \*\*\***

SoonerStart families will participate in the following safety precautions:

- The Service Provider will call the family the morning of the scheduled visit to ask health screening questions about the child, parent/guardian, and other household members. If anyone in the household has COVID-19-like symptoms as detailed by the CDC or tested positive for COVID-19 since the earlier scheduling call, the Service Provider should cancel the in-person visit.
- Adult family members will be required to wear face coverings for in-person services conducted indoors at local health departments if the facility has posted a mask requirement for all persons entering the building. Face coverings for adult family members will not be required for in-person services during Phase II held outdoors or in the family's home.
- Families will be asked to limit the number of adults present during an early intervention visit. Ideally, only one parent/guardian should be present with the child or children being evaluated or receiving SoonerStart services.
- Both parent/guardian and child will participate in any additional health screening protocols as required by the facility if services are taking place at the local health department.
- If SoonerStart staff notes that a parent/guardian or child is coughing or seems ill, they will inform the parent/guardian that the visit cannot occur in person and reschedule the visit or offer a virtual visit if the family has agreed by selecting “yes” on the contingency statement in the child’s IFSP.
- Staff can offer the parent/guardian hand sanitizer before the visit begins.
- Staff will request the parent/guardian to limit items brought into the health department setting (i.e., purse, diapers/wipes, bottle/cup).



## PHASE III: IN-PERSON SERVICES WITH RESTRICTIONS, OPTIONAL VIRTUAL SERVICES

**Trigger: Any county that is considered a “Green” county in accordance with Oklahoma’s COVID-19 Alert system**

<https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/covid-19-alert-system>

During Phase III, in-person services are available to ANY family requesting face-to-face visits in addition to those families meeting the criteria in Phase II. Virtual visits via telephone and video conferencing will continue be available as an option for intakes and early intervention service provider visits, however, eligibility evaluations and IFSP meetings will be conducted in-person with the child and family. Regardless of the location or method of services, **all verbal consent procedures will discontinue in Phase III.**

The Resource Coordinator will contact each family currently receiving virtual services to discuss the option of continuing with services provided by phone or video conferencing technology or shifting to in-person services. In-person visits may occur at the local health department, childcare facility, an out-of-doors location such as a public park, or the client's front lawn, or the family's home with proper precautions in place (i.e., masks, social distancing). An IFSP team meeting will be scheduled with families requesting to move from virtual services to in-person services to determine what modifications to the IFSP are needed.

For new families, eligibility evaluations will be conducted at the local health department by a multidisciplinary team (two staff members representing different disciplines) using either the BDI-2 or the DP3 and another procedure.

SoonerStart will return to providing virtual services during any period that the family’s county of residence is at risk level Orange or Red (as indicated by the Oklahoma COVID-19 Alert System) if the family has agreed by selecting “yes” on the contingency statement in the child’s IFSP. If the family selects “No” on the contingency statement, SoonerStart staff will cancel the service visit until the county returns to yellow or green or an IFSP modification is complete.

### Procedures for In-Person Visits

#### SoonerStart Staff

Before meeting with a family for a face-to-face in visit, the service provider (and RC, if applicable) must answer “no” to the following questions:

If you have not had COVID-19 in the past three months or currently not fully vaccinated:

- Have you had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- Are you currently ill? Do you have symptoms of a cold, cough, shortness of breath, chilling, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, sore throat, congestion, or a temperature of 100 degrees or more?
- Have you temporarily lost your sense of taste or smell or runny nose?

Staff who have had COVID-19 like symptoms as described by the CDC or have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to self-isolate at home and cannot return to the office or provide in-person services until:

- He/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without being given fever-reducing medications; **AND**
- Has had improvement in symptoms; **AND**
- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.

Staff who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 (within 6 feet of an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis) should self-quarantine for 10 days unless:

- They have had COVID-19 within the past three months or
- They are fully vaccinated (Two weeks post their 2nd COVID-19 vaccination).

Staff who are able to work while quarantined may continue to provide services through telephone and/or video conferencing technology if approved by their supervisor.

SoonerStart staff should adhere to the following safety precautions:

- Staff should continue to wear a face-covering when meeting in-person to provide maximum protection for themselves and children and families. Staff will be required to wear face coverings for in-person services conducted indoors at local health departments if the facility has a mask requirement for all employees interacting with the public.
- Staff must wash hands or disinfect hands immediately before and as soon as possible after visiting the family.
- Any in-person visits conducted at health departments will be in one designated room. Sanitation of the room should occur before and after every visit. In addition, staff should remove all unnecessary toys and items from the designated space.
- The provider will supply any items used during the visit. The provider will sanitize all items before and after each visit.
- If providing services in the family's home, participants should try to stay in one location in the home and be mindful of the surfaces and objects being handled or touched.

- Service Providers should utilize coaching practices to the greatest extent possible to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between yourself and the child or parent.
- Staff should be aware of [CDC safety precautions](#) for direct service providers.

## SoonerStart Families

When scheduling the in-person visit, staff will ask the family:

- Have you or anyone living in your home had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?
- Are you or anyone living in your home currently ill? Do you or anyone living in your house have symptoms of a cold, cough, shortness of breath, chilling, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, or a temperature of 100 degrees or more?
- Have you temporarily lost your sense of taste or smell, congestion, or runny nose?

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above questions, the in-person visit cannot occur. A virtual visit may be conducted if the family has agreed by selecting "yes" on the contingency statement in the child's IFSP. If the family selects "No" on the contingency statement, SoonerStart staff will cancel the service visit and reschedule.

SoonerStart family members who report having COVID-19 like symptoms as described by the CDC or have tested positive for COVID-19 are required to self-isolate at home and cannot receive in person services until:

- He/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without being given fever-reducing medications;  
AND
- Has had improvement in symptoms AND
- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared.

Staff should advise SoonerStart family members to follow CDC recommendations for self-quarantining if those families report exposure to COVID-19 (within 6 feet of an individual with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis). The state's contact-tracing procedures shall be followed concerning both isolation and quarantine, as indicated.

**\*\*\* SoonerStart staff should not ask about the vaccination status of family members. \*\*\***

SoonerStart families will participate in the following safety precautions during Phase III:

- The Service Provider will call the family the morning of the scheduled visit to ask health screening questions about the child, parent/guardian, and other household members. If anyone in the household has COVID-19-like symptoms as detailed by the CDC or tested positive for COVID-19 since the earlier scheduling call, the Service Provider should cancel the in-person visit.
- Adult family members will be required to wear face coverings for in-person services conducted indoors at local health departments if the facility has posted a mask requirement for all persons entering the building.
- Families will be asked to limit the number of adults present during an early intervention visit. Ideally, only one parent/guardian should be present with the child or children being evaluated or receiving SoonerStart services.
- Both parent/guardian and child will participate in any additional health screening protocols as required by the facility if services are taking place at the local health department.
- SoonerStart staff notes that a parent/guardian or child is coughing or seems ill, they will inform the parent/guardian that the visit cannot occur in person and reschedule the visit or offer a virtual visit if the family has agreed by selecting “yes” on the contingency statement in the child’s IFSP.
- Staff can offer the parent/guardian hand sanitizer before the visit begins.
- Staff will request the parent/guardian to limit items brought into the health department setting (i.e., purse, diapers/wipes, bottle/cup).

## PHASE IV: IN-PERSON SERVICES WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS,

### Trigger: TO BE DETERMINED

During Phase IV, SoonerStart staff and families may resume in-person services and meetings, including staff meetings, with no restrictions regarding masks and social distancing. SoonerStart staff will recommence procedures for new referrals, intakes, evaluations, IFSP meetings, and individualized service visits as outlined in the SoonerStart Operations Manual.

Eligibility evaluations and IFSP meetings will take place face-to-face. However, SoonerStart will continue to offer families the option of virtual early intervention service visits if allowed by the rules and regulations set forth by the Office of Special Education Programs and the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA).

# Addendum

Teams should follow the **subsequent** phase protocols as they apply to each county. It is expected that staff serving multiple counties will have to adjust their service provision based on the individual county risk/color level.

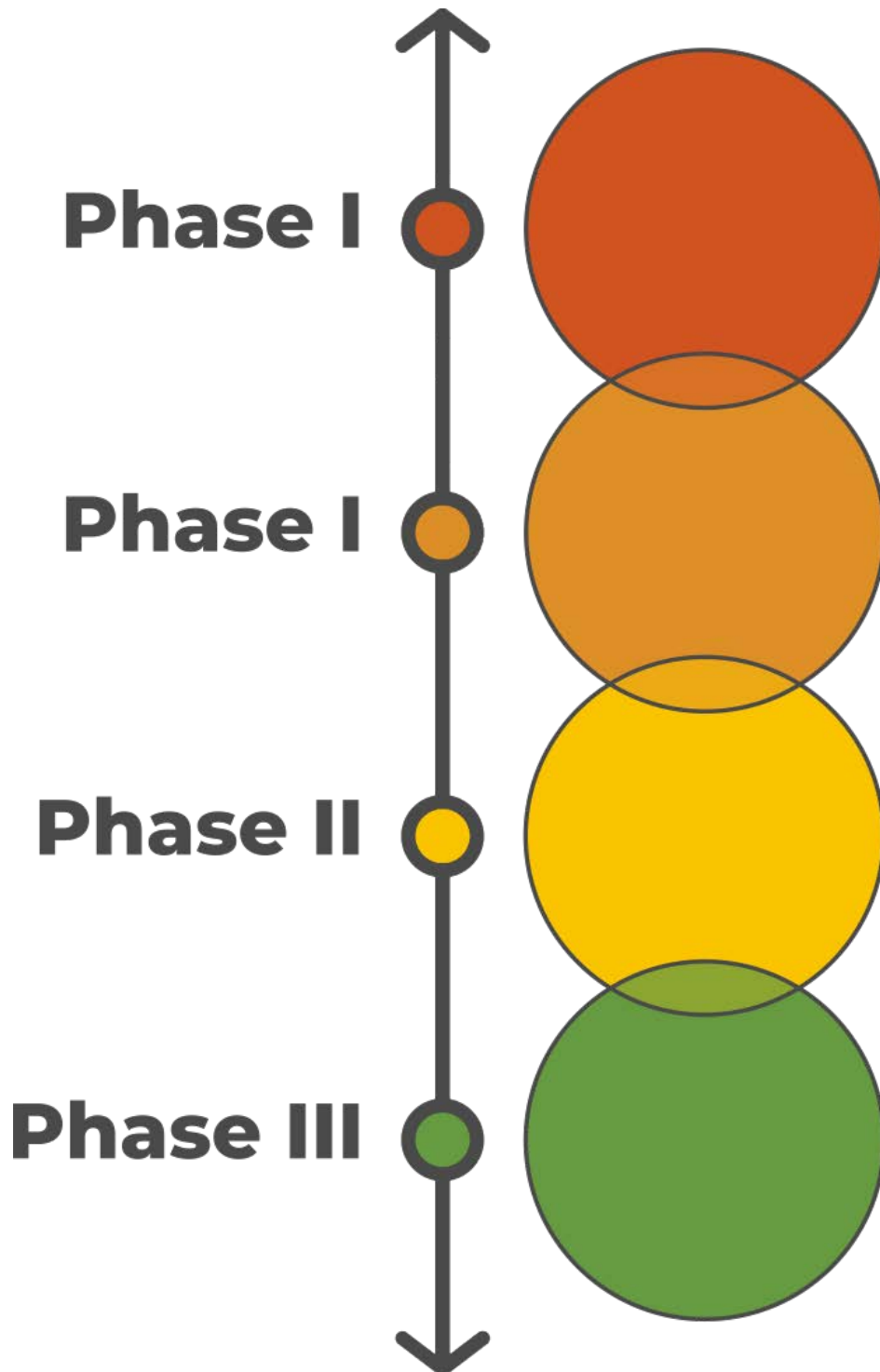
Staff who have an office or live in an orange county may travel to provide in-person services to families who live in green counties as long as staff can answer “NO” to the health questions for themselves in the Revised Re-Entry Plan. The same applies to providing services to families who live in yellow counties if the evaluation team or IFSP team determines that the eligibility evaluation and/or IFSP services are necessary to be provided in-person.



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# Guidance for Continuing/Resuming Early Intervention Services When County Risk Levels Change





# County Risk Level Changes

COUNTY RISK LEVEL	SOONERSTART SERVICES
<b>ORANGE</b> → <b>YELLOW</b>	<p>Continue Phase I until county alert is <b>Yellow</b> for two consecutive Wednesdays. Phase II (<b>Yellow</b>) services may be offered beginning the next day (Thursday). An IFSP team meeting may be required to initiate in-person services.</p>
<b>YELLOW</b> → <b>GREEN</b>	<p>Continue Phase II until county alert is <b>Green</b> for two consecutive Wednesdays. Phase III (<b>Green</b>) services may be offered per IFSP team decision, beginning the next day (Thursday).</p>
<b>GREEN</b> → <b>YELLOW</b>	<p>Continue Phase III until county alert is <b>Yellow</b> two consecutive Wednesdays. Phase II and Phase III allow in-person visits so no changes may be necessary unless determined by the IFSP team.</p>

# County Risk Level Changes

COUNTY RISK LEVEL	SOONERSTART SERVICES
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**YELLOW**



**ORANGE**

**OR**

**RED**

Continue Phase II until county is **Orange** two consecutive Wednesdays. Beginning the next day (Thursday) services will return to virtual or be rescheduled based on the Contingency Statement on the IFSP.

**GREEN**



**ORANGE**

**OR**

**RED**

Continue Phase III until county is **Orange** two consecutive Wednesdays. Beginning the next day (Thursday) services will return to virtual or be rescheduled based on the Contingency Statement on the IFSP.

# SoonerStart

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