



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of Aging and People with Disabilities

Safety, Oversight and Quality Unit

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NF-20-149 -Provider Alert



DATE: November 23, 2020

TO: All Nursing Facilities
All Assisted Living Facilities
All Residential Care Facilities

FROM: Jack Honey, Administrator
Safety, Oversight and Quality Unit,
Office of Aging and People with Disabilities

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Guidance on Holiday Season

Dear Providers:

As the holiday season approaches, residents and their families are making decisions about how to celebrate with their loved ones. With the current statewide “two-week freeze” set by Governor Brown and the suspension of indoor visitation to long term care facilities, you may receive questions from residents or their family members about how to safely celebrate the holidays with loved ones.

We at the Department ask that you take this opportunity to communicate proactively with your communities to ensure a healthy and safe holiday season. Included in this letter are:

- Overview of guidance, with links to guidance documents for more details
- Sample communication to use with residents and families

Visitation and re-entry guidance

State of Oregon [Executive Order 20-65](#) issued a statewide “two-week freeze” from November 18 through December 2, unless extended by the governor. The order **rescinds the indoor visitation policy** for long term care facilities and limits social gatherings to no more than six people from a maximum of two separate households.

If residents choose to leave the facility for holiday visits with family or friends, those residents should be screened prior to reentry. [See guidance from June 3](#) on re-entry screening, which includes checking for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 as well as a risk-based interview. If the risk-based interview indicates the resident engaged in behavior that poses a significant risk of COVID-19 exposure, the resident may be placed on a 14-day enhanced monitoring period. During this period, the resident may be asked to limit the amount of time spent outside of their room.

The federal Department of Health & Human Services' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued [holiday recommendations for facilities](#). "While CMS supports family engagement and a resident's right to leave the nursing home, everyone needs to work together to take extra precautions to help reduce the spread of COVID19, which can pose an elevated danger to the health of nursing home [and other long term care] residents. Therefore, CMS recommends against residents leaving the nursing home during this [public health emergency]." All community members should continue to follow COVID-19 guidance, including:

- Wear a face covering in public
- Maintain a social distance of at least six feet from other people
- Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds

Communication

The Department encourages you to communicate with residents and families to ensure they understand their options as well as the risks associated with holiday celebrations. We all understand the desire to spend the holidays with family and friends and we know the added risk that this can pose to older Americans and people with underlying health conditions. It's important to acknowledge both the human need for social interaction and the risk to help residents carefully plan how they will celebrate the holidays.

Here is some sample text to adapt as needed for your facility to communicate with families of residents:

Many people living in congregate settings are uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19 and may have health conditions putting them at a higher risk of becoming sick, or even severely ill, with COVID-19. We encourage you to communicate with the facility or residents before making plans to bring your loved one home to understand their policies and ensure your celebration is as safe as possible.

When deciding whether to include your loved one in a holiday gathering, it is important to take into account both the health and safety of your loved one, as well as the health and safety of your loved one's roommates, other people living on their floor or in their home, and the staff that care for them. There are several ways to celebrate the holidays with your loved one. Due to the rise in cases across the state and country, we recommend participating in a lower risk visit with your loved one.

Examples of Ways to Celebrate

Low risk: Celebrate virtually with your loved one using methods such as Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, or Google Duo.

Low-medium risk: Visit your loved one outdoors at their residence, if allowed. Bring a favorite Thanksgiving food or a holiday treat (within the facility's guidelines), following safety guidelines including mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing. Notify the facility in advance to schedule your visit.

Medium-high risk: Bring your loved one home to celebrate with just your household, following safety guidelines including mask wearing, hand washing, social distancing, and frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces. For two weeks prior to your holiday gatherings, limit exposure to COVID-19 by avoiding indoor settings with people you don't live with where you cannot socially distance or wear a mask (e.g., indoor social events, restaurants, carpooling). Your loved one may need to quarantine for 14 days upon return to their congregate care setting.

Very high risk: Bring your loved one home to celebrate with multiple households, and/or not following social distancing, handwashing, cleaning, or mask guidance. ***NOTE: This does not conform to statewide guidance currently in effect limiting social gatherings to no more than six people from a maximum of two households.***

If you have any questions, please contact your licensing team:

CBC.team@dhsola.state.or.us

NF.licensing@dhsola.state.or.us

For general information about the DHS Office of Safety, Oversight and Quality, please click here: [Safety, Oversight and Quality Unit](#)

Thank you for the professional and compassionate care that you provide every day. Working together, we can ensure that your residents and your staff have a healthy and happy holiday season.