



## Department of Health

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**DATE:** November 24, 2020

**TO:** Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities

### **Health Advisory: Holiday Guidance for Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities**

#### **Please distribute immediately to:**

Administrators, Infection Preventionists, Medical Directors, Nursing Directors, Risk Managers, and Public Affairs Personnel.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment and efforts to support New York State's (NYS) response to COVID-19. New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) wants to ensure that the health, safety, and quality of life of nursing home residents is maintained this holiday season. During the holiday season, residents and families may want to spend more time together. Facilities must continue to ensure that all visitors adhere to all visitation guidelines and facility policies and strictly adhere to infection prevention and control measures such as social distancing and face covering requirements.

Additionally:

- Facilities are encouraged to find creative and innovative ways to celebrate the holidays without having parties, including staff parties, or social gatherings that could increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Examples may include virtual visitation, virtual parties, seasonal music, in-room holiday book and movie options, and festive decorations.
- NYSDOH and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recommend against residents leaving nursing homes for home or family visitation or other social outings during the holiday season. Data has shown that small family gatherings contribute to COVID-19 spread. The CDC and NYSDOH recommend that individuals at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 avoid in-person gatherings with individuals with whom they do not live.
- Please refer to the September 17, 2020 Revised Skilled Nursing Facility Visitation which can be found at [https://health.ny.gov/facilities/nursing/docs/2020-09-17\\_revised\\_visitation\\_advisory.pdf](https://health.ny.gov/facilities/nursing/docs/2020-09-17_revised_visitation_advisory.pdf).
- NYSDOH recommends that facilities promote and increase virtual communications during the holiday season.
- Nursing home and adult care facility staff should educate the families who are contemplating taking a resident out of a facility for the holidays, as well as the residents about the risks of leaving the facility and the alternative virtual communication options available.

- If a resident leaves for home or family visitation or for a social outing, the following requirements must be met for the resident's return to the facility for the safety of other residents and staff:
  - Nursing home and Adult Care Facility staff should remind residents to follow all recommended infection prevention and control measures outside the facility, including:
    - Limiting close contact with others (maintaining physical distancing of six feet or more), avoiding large gatherings and keeping gatherings as small as possible, and use of technology to engage with others remotely
    - Wear facemasks or cloth face covering to the extent possible
    - Performing frequent hand hygiene
    - Avoiding sharing of communal food or drinks
- Residents who leave a facility must:
  - Quarantine or minimize contact to the extent safely possible prior to their return to the facility.
  - Be quarantined on transmission-based precautions upon return to the facility for 14 days.
  - Test negative immediately (within 24 hours) prior to return to the facility.
  - Be tested at least three times during the 14-day quarantine period at the facility, including on the first day (upon return) and the last day that a resident must be quarantined.
- Facilities must:
  - Develop a plan for the return of residents leaving for home or family visits for social outings. The plan should include a cohorting plan for returning residents, estimating the space, staff, and PPE available.
  - Notify families taking residents out of the facility that residents will not be permitted to return until they present a negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result within the preceding 24 hours.
  - Certify as required by Executive Order 202.77, and Executive Order 202.30 that they have the ability to implement transmission-based precautions for such residents for fourteen days upon return in compliance with NYSDOH guidance and CMS directives.
  - Require the leaving resident and a family or friend to attest in writing that they:
    - 1) Are aware of the risks involved with taking the resident out of the facility;
    - 2) Will follow masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene practices pursuant to CDC and DOH directives;
    - 3) Will notify the facility if the resident becomes ill within one week of leaving the facility;
    - 4) Will notify the facility if anyone with whom the resident socialized tests positive for COVID-19 or influenza or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 and influenza within 14 days of the resident's return to the facility;
    - 5) Will communicate with the facility about a return date for the resident to the facility in accordance with the facility's policy; and
    - 6) Will quarantine or minimize contact (or assist the resident to do so) to the extent safely possible prior to return to a nursing home.
  - Screen and increase monitoring for signs and symptoms of illness upon resident return.
  - Test residents for COVID-19 and influenza if the resident develops signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or influenza or if the resident had a confirmed or

possible exposure to COVID-19 or influenza while outside a nursing home or adult care facility.

Questions regarding this advisory should be emailed to [covidnursinghomeinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidnursinghomeinfo@health.ny.gov). or [covidadultcareinfo@health.ny.gov](mailto:covidadultcareinfo@health.ny.gov) Thank you for your ongoing commitment to resident health and safety during this Public Health Emergency.