



Oregon

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NF-21-068 – Provider Alert

Date: November 22, 2021

To: All Nursing Facility Providers
All Assisted Living Facility Providers
All Residential Care Facility Providers

From: Aging and People with Disabilities
Safety, Oversight and Quality Unit

Subject: **COVID-19 Holiday Guidance**



The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) are committed to protecting the health and safety of residents in nursing facilities, assisted living facilities and residential care facilities. With the holiday season fast approaching, we understand that residents and their families will want to spend more time together. During the holidays, facilities, residents, and visitors should continue to follow the guidelines for visitation and adhere to the core principles of infection prevention, such as:

- Visitors who have a positive viral test for COVID-19, symptoms of COVID-19, or currently meet the criteria for quarantine, should not enter the facility. Facilities should screen all who enter for these visitation exclusions.
- Perform hand hygiene.
- Remaining six feet or more apart, wearing a face covering.
- Limit large gatherings, crowded areas, and high-risk activities such as singing.
- Finding innovative ways of celebrating the holidays without having large parties or gatherings that could increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission (e.g., stagger holiday visitation, virtual parties or visits, provide seasonal music, movies, decorations, etc.).
- Wearing face coverings, in accordance with [OAR 333-019-1011](#).
- Instructional signage throughout the facility and proper visitor education on COVID19 signs and symptoms, infection control precautions, other applicable facility practices (e.g., use of face covering or mask, specified

- entries, exits and routes to designated areas, hand hygiene)
- Appropriate staff use of [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#).
- Cleaning and disinfecting high frequency touched surfaces in the facility often, and designated visitation areas after each visit.
- Effective cohorting of residents (e.g., separate areas dedicated to COVID-19 care)
- Resident and staff testing conducted as required at 42 CFR § 483.80(h) ([see QSO20- 38-NH](#))

There are currently no restrictions regarding holiday decorations, they are encouraged. It is permissible for residents to participate in group activities around the holiday season as long as the facility is adhering to core principles of infection prevention described above and the facility is not experiencing an outbreak.

Visitors are required to remain masked throughout their visit, regardless of their vaccination status. Residents and their visitors may eat meals together and briefly unmask if they are both fully vaccinated, the resident is not moderately or severely immunocompromised, and they remain in the resident's room. If the resident has a roommate that is unvaccinated or immunocompromised (regardless of vaccination status), visits should not be conducted in the resident's room if possible. Facilities should continue to avoid large gatherings (e.g., parties, events) where large numbers of visitors are in the same space and physical distancing cannot be maintained. It is recommended, though not required, that visitors be tested on their own before coming to the facility (e.g., within 2-3 days).

COVID-19 and influenza vaccination can reduce the spread of respiratory illness during the holiday season. Currently, long-term care facility staff and residents are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination booster if they are at least 6 months post-mRNA vaccine series (Pfizer, Moderna) or 2 months post-Johnson & Johnson Janssen shot. Influenza vaccination and receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose is strongly recommended as we head into the holiday season.

We also know that some residents may want to leave the facility temporarily to visit family and friends for the holidays or other outings. While ODHS supports family engagement and a resident's right to leave the facility, everyone needs to work together to take extra precautions to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, which can pose an elevated danger to the health of facility residents.

Leaving the facility could increase a resident's risk for exposure to COVID-19. The risk may be further increased by factors such as a resident's health status, the spread of COVID-19 in the community (e.g., cases or positivity rate), or attendance at large gatherings. We encourage residents to discuss these and other risks with their families and facility staff. Facilities should educate residents and families of the risks of leaving the facility, the steps they should take to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19. Should a resident ultimately choose to leave the facility, ODHS is providing the following recommendations:

- Limit close contact (maintain physical distancing of six feet or more), keep gatherings as small as possible, and use technology to engage with others remotely.
- Wear facemasks or cloth face covering.
- Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items.
- Keep safe around food and drinks. Avoid communal serving utensils, passing of food, potluck or buffetstyle food service, and instead opt for individually prepared plates by a single server.
- Perform hand hygiene often (e.g., wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- Avoid large gatherings, crowded areas, and high-risk activities such as singing.
- Ask anyone who has signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or has been exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, to not attend the gathering.
- Indoor gatherings should have good ventilation, open windows if possible. Ventilation tips for indoor settings for be found on CDC's webpage on [ventilation in buildings](#).
- Check local conditions and state requirements for precautions and restrictions, including positivity rates and quarantine requirements, before crossing state lines.

We encourage you to review CDC's [webpage on holiday celebrations](#), which has more suggestions for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Note to staff: Staff should also use extra caution, especially during the holidays. Staff should follow the same recommendations for residents and families regarding gathering with their families and friends outside of work to protect the vulnerable residents they care for.

This alert is prepared as a service to the public and is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. We encourage facilities to review the specific statutes, regulations, and other interpretive materials for a full and accurate statement of their contents.

If you have questions, please contact your licensing team:

Nursing Facility Providers: NF.licensing@dhsosha.state.or.us

Community Based Care Providers: CBC.team@dhsosha.state.or.us.

Oregon Department of Human Services website: www.oregon.gov/DHS/