



Long-Term Care Residents, Families, Loved Ones, and the Holidays

TO: Families, Residents, Loved Ones, and Facility Administrators

FROM: New Mexico Department of Health

ISSUED: November 20, 2020

As we begin the holiday season and due to the massive rise in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations throughout New Mexico, the Department of Health is issuing the following recommendations on how to celebrate the holidays with your loved ones who reside in a long-term care setting such as a nursing home, assisted living facility or intermediate care facility. We know that the holidays are an important time for New Mexicans. As you make plans to visit and celebrate with your loved one, we encourage you to consider the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19.

Staying Safe this Holiday Season

There are important considerations when planning celebrations with a loved one who lives in a congregate setting. Many people who live in a long-term care facility are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and may have health conditions putting them at a higher risk of becoming sick, experiencing severe illness, or even death, from COVID-19.

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 a number of ways to celebrate the holidays with your loved one. New Mexico is imploring the public to please participate in the lowest risk visit possible with your loved one.

Guidelines on Visits and Travel

All in-person visits and off-sites must follow established guidance and protocols. Please check the latest visitation [guidance for long term care facilities here](#) and contact your loved one's facility about setting up a virtual visit, in-person visit, or making off-site arrangements. Please give particular attention to the most recent positivity rates in the county where the facility is located on the same webpage.

Prior to any in-person visit, all participants should contact their loved ones facility and follow all guidelines. Out-of-state family members visiting for the holidays must comply with all travel requirements outlined in the [New Mexico Executive Order](#).

Holiday Activities Risk Table

RISK LEVEL	HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES
LOW RISK - SAFEST	Celebrate <u>virtually</u> with your loved one using methods such as Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, or Google Duo.
LOW-MEDIUM RISK	Visit your loved one at their residence. Bring a favorite Thanksgiving food or a holiday treat (within the facility’s guidelines), follow all safety protocols including mask wearing, hand washing, and social distancing.
MEDIUM-HIGH RISK	<p>Bringing 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.</p> <p>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 will be required to quarantine for 14 days upon return to their congregate care setting.</p>
VERY HIGH RISK	<p>Bringing your loved one home to celebrate with multiple households, and/or not following social distancing, handwashing, cleaning, or mask guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing food/drinks • Shaking hands, hugging • Singing, dancing, shouting