



Holiday Guidance for Residents, Staff, and Visitors of Residential Care Settings November 19, 2020

This guidance applies to residents, staff, residents' families, and visitors of nursing homes, adult care homes, behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability facilities, intermediate care facilities, and psychiatric residential treatment facilities.

As we move into the holiday season, we wanted to remind staff, families, and visitors of residents in residential care settings of the importance of protecting this vulnerable population.

CDC states on their [Holiday Celebrations and Small Gatherings](#) webpage, "if you are an older person... you should avoid in-person gatherings with people who are not in your household." For people who live in a residential care setting, their "household" is composed of the residents and staff within their facility. Leaving the facility to spend time with a different group of people can put the health of the resident and others in the facility at risk.

For this reason, we recommend that residents do not leave the facility to attend holiday events with individuals outside of their household. We also recommend that staff do not attend holiday events or gatherings with individuals outside of their household.

Residential care facilities are at a very high risk for COVID-19 transmission and activities that residents and staff engage in outside of the facility may impact the health of the entire facility.

North Carolina strongly encourages that facilities, families and staff plan lower-risk activities such as those listed in the [NC Holiday Guidance](#) such as delivering holiday meals to higher risk individuals, having a virtual meal, or doing an outdoor visit at the facility. Families bear responsibility to assure the health and safety of their loved ones, since additional risk is incurred in activities conducted outside the facility. If a resident or staff engage in events or gatherings with those outside of their household, the following guidelines are recommended:

Residents:

- Residents and families should be educated and encouraged to follow masking, social distancing and hand hygiene practices. They must notify the facility if anyone who attended the holiday gathering tests positive for COVID-19 or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 within 48 hours of the resident visit/stay outside the facility.
- Residents who leave the facility for holiday visits or gatherings should follow [CMS guidance](#). (Note: While CMS guidance is directed to nursing homes and their residents and families, the guidance is appropriate for other residential care settings as well. NC DHHS urges all residential care facilities to follow the CMS guidance.) Quarantine may be considered based on identified risks.

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- Develop a plan with families for residents who leave the facility in advance.
- Consider testing residents upon return to the facility.
 - A person with a positive test should be placed on isolation.
 - A person with a negative test should remain in quarantine for the full 14 days
- Consider increased testing intervals for residents throughout the holidays and in the following 14 days.

Family / Visitors:

- Consider getting a screening test ahead of your visit/gathering.
 - If you test positive, cancel any holiday plans, stay home, and isolate.
 - Even if you test negative, it's important to continue to follow the prevention measures and practice the [3Ws](#).
- Limit the number of guests and households at holiday visits/gatherings.
- Follow the North Carolina holiday guidance

Staff:

- Instruct staff to follow the [North Carolina holiday guidance](#) to prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into the facility.
 - Follow masking, social distancing and hand hygiene practices.
 - Since you will have to return to work and not be able to quarantine after family gatherings, introduction of COVID-19 into the facility may occur if guidelines are not followed.
- Maintain consistency in staffing patterns – assign the same staff to the same residents to minimize exposures. Consider cohorting residents and staff who participated in holiday events/gatherings outside of the facility.
- Consider increased testing intervals for staff throughout the holidays and in the following 14 days.

Facilities should communicate their plan with residents, families, and staff.