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November 16, 2020

TO: Administrators
Long-term Care Facilities Licensed Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:39
Assisted Living Residences Licensed Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:36
Comprehensive Personal Care Homes Licensed Pursuant to
N.J.A.C. 8:36
Residential Health Care Facilities Licensed Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:42
Dementia Care Homes Licensed Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:37

FROM: Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A.
Commissioner

SUBJECT: Holiday Visitation Guidance

THIS GUIDANCE REGARDING HOLIDAY VISITATION IS MEANT TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC) AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SERVICE (CDS), AND CURRENT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH DIRECTIVES AND ORDERS.

The virus that causes Coronavirus 2019 Disease (“COVID-19”) is easily transmitted, especially in group settings. Many residents of health care facilities are being treated for health conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to suffering the most serious complications of COVID-19 infection, including death. The State of New Jersey is currently experiencing a rise in COVID-19 cases and community spread. As the upcoming holiday season will include family visitation, it is imperative for the residents of congregate living facilities that their families and facility staff take precautions in order to provide a safe environment for everyone.

Because of the risk of the rapid spread of the virus, and the need to protect all members of the community, especially residents of health care facilities who are at increased risk of serious complications and death from COVID-19, the Department of Health (DOH) is providing the following guidance regarding visitation during the upcoming holiday season.

1. The April 13, 2020 Emergency Curtailment of Admission Order is still in effect. Facilities that cannot implement proper infection control protocols, cannot cohort, or do not have enough staff, PPE and cleaning supplies to properly care for all residents, may not admit or readmit residents into their facility. 4/13/2020 Order: https://www.state.nj.us/health/legal/covid19/8-20_ExecutiveDirectiveNo20-026_LTCResumption_of_Svcs.pdf
2. The DOH strongly recommends against families taking residents out of facilities for holiday celebration events or gatherings. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [reported](#) that a significant driver of the recent case increases is small family gatherings. The CDC and the DOH recommend that individuals at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 avoid in-person gatherings with individuals with whom they do not live.
3. Instead of family visits outside of the facility, the DOH recommends visitation outdoors, or possibly indoors in facilities that meet the requirements for indoor visitation in accordance with DOH Executive Directive 20-026¹. Increased virtual communications in lieu of visitation should be used by facilities during the holidays.
4. Facilities should encourage families that decide to bring residents to gatherings outside of the facility to follow CDC guidance for celebrating the holidays: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>. Facilities should remind residents to follow all recommended infection prevention and control measures when gathering during the holidays, including social distancing, hand hygiene and wearing a cloth face covering or face mask.
5. Families that decide to take their family members out of their facilities should plan in advance of the event. Residents that leave their facilities for family celebrations must be quarantined upon their return to the facility in accordance with CDC guidance as follows:
 - a. Require all individuals who leave the facility for holiday gatherings/visits to quarantine for 14 days upon return to the facility.
 - b. If the resident lives in a private residence or room, the resident may be quarantined in their private residence or room. These residents should still be separated from others in the facility for 14 days upon their return.
 - c. If the resident has a roommate, the resident should be quarantined in an observation room in the facility's new or re-admissions cohort, if one is available, for 14 days upon their return.

¹ [Directive for the Resumption of Services in all Long-Term Care Facilities licensed pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:43, N.J.A.C. 8:39, N.J.A.C. 8:36 and N.J.A.C. 8:37](#)

- d. If an observation room is not available, the facility should notify the family that the resident will not be permitted to return to the facility until a room is available or until the facility is otherwise able to cohort returning residents in compliance with current CDC and DOH guidance and directives, which are available here: [Recommendations for Long-Term Care Facilities during COVID-19 Pandemic](#) **UPDATED** 11/3/20
[Testing in Response to a Newly Identified COVID-19 Case in Long-term Care Facilities](#) **REVISED** 10/29/20
[Considerations for Cohorting COVID-19 Patients in Post-Acute Care Facilities](#) **UPDATED** 10/22/20
- e. ***Facilities should develop and implement a plan in preparation for the return of residents leaving the facility for holiday visits/gatherings that includes the following:***
- i. Estimate how many residents can be cohorted, dependent on the facility's available space, for a 14-day quarantine period based on current census and projected census from Nov. 25 through Dec. 31, 2020, as well as available PPE and staff.
 - ii. Establish a sign-up process for residents and families to make reservations before taking a resident out of the facility. Reservations should be available up to the number of people the facility can accommodate for a 14-day quarantine period. Require the number of days requested for leave to be confirmed 36 hours before the resident leaves the facility.
 - iii. Create a waiting list for those residents who request a reservation after the established limit has been reached. Residents that leave without a reservation or on a waiting list may not be guaranteed readmittance to the facility at the end of their visit outside of the facility; please plan in advance for such situations. Residents/families should be informed of this possibility.
 - iv. Require 36 hours' notice of cancellation/change in plans before a resident is taken out of the facility for a family visit.
 - v. Require the resident and family/friend to certify that:
 1. They are aware of the possible dangers of exposure to COVID-19 for both the resident and family/friend;
 2. They will follow masking, social distancing and hand hygiene practices pursuant to CDC and DOH directives; and

3. They will notify the facility if anyone present at the holiday gatherings tests positive for COVID-19 or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days of the resident's visit/stay outside the facility.
 - vi. The facility should obtain a signed certification from each family/friend and resident (if the resident is unable to consent, then consent needs to be signed by the authorized representative) with a copy provided to the family/friend and resident.
 - f. ***Prior to taking a resident out of the facility, family members should contact the facility's administration to make sure that an observation room will be available upon the return of the resident or they can make a reservation as delineated above. Facilities may require that families care for their loved ones until there is a room available to quarantine the resident. Families should work with the facility's administration to have a plan for quarantining the resident and for the resident's return.***
6. Facilities should use the CDS risk assessment tool to help inform their planning for the leave of residents from their facility's during the holiday celebrations. The guidance can be found here:
https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/INFCONT_exp_risk_asses_s_template_patients_postacute.pdf

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