

With the upcoming holiday season, the New Jersey Department of Health today issued health and safety guidance for the state's long-term care facilities, which provides measures for residents who leave the facility for a holiday gathering, including a 14-day quarantine at the conclusion of their visit.

To protect the health of this vulnerable population, the Department strongly recommends against families taking residents out of facilities for holiday celebration events or gatherings. Instead, the Department recommends visitation outdoors or possibly indoors in facilities that meet the requirements for indoor visitation. Long-term care facilities should plan to accommodate increased virtual communications for residents.

"Small family gatherings are a significant driver of increasing cases, and bringing your loved one's home could put them at risk," said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli. "We remain concerned about the number of outbreaks we are seeing in long-term care, so we need to be especially vigilant to protect this population. We continue to partner with the industry to improve quality and infection control in these facilities."

Long-term care facilities need to develop a plan for holiday visits and gatherings which estimate the number of residents who can be cohorted for a 14-day quarantine period from Nov. 25 through Dec. 31.

Long-term care facilities should create a reservation process tied to the number of individuals the facility can quarantine on their return. Residents who leave the facility for family visits must be quarantined upon return to the facility either in their own room, if they have a private room, or in an observation room.

A waiting list should be created once the reservation list is full. However, residents and families should be informed that residents who leave without a reservation or while on a waiting list may not be guaranteed readmittance to the facility at the end of their visit. Residents and families must certify that they will follow masking, social distancing and hand hygiene practices, and that they will notify the facility if anyone who attended the holiday gathering tests positive for COVID-19 or exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 within 14 days of the resident's visit/stay outside the facility.