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Dear Families,

As we enter into this holiday season during this phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Massachusetts and across the country, we are providing this guidance to families on celebrating Thanksgiving and winter holidays with your loved ones who reside in a congregate setting including a nursing home, rest home, assisted living residence or group home. The best way to minimize COVID-19 risk and keep your family and friends safe this holiday season is to get vaccinated and to avoid holiday gatherings if you are not well. The safest way to celebrate is at home, with the people you live with.

There are important considerations when planning celebrations with a loved one who lives in a congregate setting. Many people living in congregate settings are uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19 and may have health conditions putting them at a higher risk of becoming sick, or even severely ill, with COVID-19.

There are a number of ways to safely celebrate the holidays with your loved one. Due to continued COVID-19 transmission across the state and country, we suggest that you consider the following recommendations from the CDC to enjoy holiday traditions and protect your health and the health of your loved one:

- Everyone five years and older is now eligible for vaccines. The best protection is to get vaccinated.
- For individuals not fully vaccinated, please wear a well-fitting mask when indoors in a public setting.
- If you are sick or have COVID-like symptoms, do not attend a holiday gathering.
- If you have COVID-like symptoms or have been recently in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, please get tested.

Guidelines on Visits and Travel

All in-person visits and off-sites must follow established existing guidance and protocols. Please check the latest visitation guidance for [long-term care facilities](#), [ALRs](#), and [congregate care settings](#) and contact your loved one's residence if there are any questions or

making off-site arrangements.

Prior to any in-person visit, all participants should [screen](#) themselves for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and are encouraged to get a COVID-19 test. Some facilities may offer testing and loved ones are encouraged to request it, if available. Please check [Mass.gov/GetTested](https://www.mass.gov/GetTested) for locations.

If you are considering traveling for a holiday or event, visit CDC's [Travel](#) page to help you decide what is best for you and your family. Everyone, even individuals who are fully vaccinated, is [required to wear a mask](#) on public transportation and follow [international travel recommendations](#).

Additional Resources

In addition to discussing with your loved one's facility or residence, there are resources available to discuss how to safely celebrate with your loved one. Families of loved ones in long-term care settings, including nursing homes, rest homes and assisted living residences, can contact the [Nursing Home Family Resource at 617-660-5399](#).

Families of loved ones in other congregate settings should reach out to their loved one's case manager, social worker, or service coordinator for additional support.

We hope that you and your loved ones have a safe and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marylou Sudders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marylou Sudders