

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

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November 25, 2020

**HOLIDAY GATHERINGS****MESSAGE TO SELF-ADVOCATES, FAMILIES, PROVIDERS AND REGIONAL CENTERS**

The holiday season provides an opportunity for us to give thanks, reflect on the events of the past year and consider the possibilities a new year will bring. We want to thank you for collaborating and supporting each other during this pandemic. When called upon to be creative, innovative and to support each other, you responded and continue to respond. We are aware there are continued support needs and we are working daily to enhance current efforts on behalf of self-advocates, families, service providers and regional centers.

The holiday season is also a time when family and friends enjoy gathering, but this year it is necessary for all of us to modify or pause usual traditions, to minimize risk, keep each other safe and help stop the spread of COVID-19. The safest way to celebrate holidays this year is to stay at home with members of your own household. It is strongly encouraged that everyone take necessary precautions. This includes exploring alternative and virtual methods of connecting with those outside of the immediate household (such as using Zoom or FaceTime), avoiding travel, respectfully declining situations that potentially increase risk and offering kindness by dropping off meals for individuals who are elderly or have underlying health conditions so they can stay home more easily.

Throughout the holiday season, it is important to remain diligent in our efforts to reduce the spread of the virus. Please continue to wear a mask or face covering when in public or with those outside of your home, stay at least six feet away from others and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the California Department of Public Health have issued guidance on keeping your holiday celebrations safe for all.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/thanksgiving.html>
- <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-for-the-Prevention-of-COVID-19-Transmission-for-Gatherings-November-2020.aspx>

On behalf of the Department, we wish everyone a safe and uniquely special holiday season.

Sincerely,

NANCY BARGMANN  
Director

**“Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices”**