

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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December 23, 2020

CRITICAL HOLIDAY RISK MITIGATION STRATEGIES**MESSAGE TO SELF-ADVOCATES, FAMILIES, PROVIDERS AND REGIONAL CENTERS**

As this year draws to a close, the Department of Developmental Services (Department) is reminding everyone that it is necessary and essential 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. During the last few weeks, the number of reported regional center consumer and/or support staff COVID-19 cases has dramatically increased. Southern California and San Joaquin Valley intensive care units (ICU) have reached maximum capacity and ICU capacities in other regions of the state are rapidly dropping. We must continue to adhere to necessary precautions. This includes using alternative and virtual methods of connecting with those outside of your immediate household (such as 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.

Whenever possible, service providers must reduce sharing of staff between facilities and other settings. If additional staff support is needed, please contact your regional center. In-person visits to individuals residing in residential facilities should be limited, as stated in the Department's [March 23, 2020 Directive](#). If visits are necessary and cannot be conducted through remote electronic communications the service provider must develop and implement a risk mitigation plan that includes:

- Requiring physical distancing at all times
- Requiring face coverings to the extent possible for all individuals involved
- Screening visitors for signs of illness or exposure to COVID-19
- Canceling or rescheduling the visit if anyone has a known or suspected exposure (reschedule for no sooner than 14 days following exposure)
- Providing supplies for hand hygiene
- Implementing rigorous cleaning/disinfecting post visit

Throughout the holiday season, it is important to remain diligent in your efforts to reduce the spread of the virus and prevent exposure as much as possible. The decisions you make this Holiday could have potential to impact others and could be the determining factor in whether they will be able to celebrate next year. We know public health guidance limits the spread of COVID-19. 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, stay at home per state and local public health officer orders and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

“Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices”

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Please stay informed about the impact to regional center consumers by reviewing data provided and updated by the Department twice a week.

- <https://www.dds.ca.gov/corona-virus-information-and-resources/data/>.

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.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-for-the-Prevention-of-COVID-19-Transmission-for-Gatherings-November-2020.aspx>

While this is an extremely challenging time for all and particularly our community, I remain proud of the partnership, caring and outreach offered by self-advocates, families, service providers, their remarkable staff, advocates and regional centers. I know if we work together, we can get through this together. On behalf of the Department, we wish everyone a safe and caring Holiday and the very best in the New Year.

Sincerely,

NANCY BARGMANN
Director