

Session 12: Safe Visitation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Key Takeaways:

- There are many holiday seasons throughout the year. It is important to respect and value each person's holiday goals and preferences. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>
- Visitation policies should be specific and detailed, including any limitations related to number of visitors, visitors from out of state, visitors with any possible signs/symptoms of COVID-19, indoor visit location/s and points of entry and exit, use of masks or full PPE, social distancing, hand hygiene, testing requirements.
- Many residents may ask about going out with family/friends over particular holidays and whether or not they may attend family gatherings with up to 10 people or more. Consult your state department of public health for updated state-specific guidance on this topic, as well as current CDC and CMS recommendations.

The following question set can be used to facilitate discussions and reveal opportunities across and within key members of interprofessional teams, residents and visitors. Please consider using/adapting them in your next huddles or team meetings.

Questions by Content

May residents go out over a holiday (one day or overnight) with family or friends and attend social gatherings	Are written protocols in place that address whether or not residents may leave the nursing home to attend holiday gatherings? Are these materials detailed? Do they include instructions for residents and family members/care partners regarding screening for symptoms, length of time away from the nursing home, number of individuals at social gatherings (no more than 10 people), use and type of mask, hand hygiene, social distancing, logistics upon resident's return (e.g., return to resident's regular room vs 14 days on the observation unit, testing protocols, screening for signs/symptoms for 14 days post-visit).
Documenting and Reporting Visits outside of the Nursing Home	Is there a process in place for documenting visits outside of the nursing home for each resident and unit? Who is responsible for overseeing visit protocols and documentation? Is it clear when an activity or concern should be flagged or reported to leadership?
Follow-Up Plan (monitoring over time)	Does the COVID-19 Task Force or Team review aggregate data on holiday visits and new positive COVID-19 cases? Are patterns identified and if so, who makes decisions about potential policy changes related to holiday visitation outside of the nursing home?
Improvement Concepts	Is the IP or designee in regular communication with local (e.g., municipal or board of health) officials to learn about any additional updates to community (county) case rates? Does the IP ask staff members and visitors for feedback on what would improve the visitation process?

Critical Questions for Leadership

	Is there evidence that the IP or appropriately trained designee is following nursing home protocols for visitation outside of the nursing home? Can they articulate circumstances in which the resident would not be able to go on a holiday visit? Do all relevant staff state that they have a basic understanding of resident and care partner/family member screening and assessment related to holiday visitation processes?
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Key Concepts by Stakeholder Group

What do Medical Directors Need to know and discuss with the team?	Medical directors must be familiar with nursing home policies on holiday visitation, and when residents may or may not go out for a holiday or social gathering. Medical directors must meet or speak regularly with the IP, DON, Administrator and the nursing home's COVID-19 Team or Task Force to review and update visitation policies, particularly if/when rates of COVID-19 community transmission change.
What do DONs and nursing supervisors need to know?	DONs must have contact information for individuals at the state department of public health and/or local boards of health who can answer questions about holiday visitation outside of nursing homes in that city/town or state. DONs must have a system for assessing and monitoring staff knowledge and skills related to holiday visitation and social gatherings, and actions to be taken if a resident or visitor screens positive or has signs/symptoms of COVID-19.
What does the interprofessional team need to know?	Team members must know the nursing home's guidelines for holiday visitation and how to determine whether or not residents may leave the nursing home for holiday or social gatherings. Teams must demonstrate open, frequent, supportive communication across and within departments and between point-of-care (direct care) workers and leadership/administration. Team members (all departments) must consistently and reliably demonstrate that they document and report any concerns to their supervisor or leadership in a timely manner before residents may go out to a family or social gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic.