

County of Santa Clara
Public Health Department

Health Officer
976 Lenzen Avenue, 2nd Floor
San José, CA 95126
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 8, 2020

TO: Licensed Skilled Nursing Facilities and Other Long-Term Care Facilities;
Assisted Living Facilities and Independent Living Facilities; Residential Care and
Crisis Residential Facilities in Santa Clara County

FROM: Sara H. Cody, MD
Health Officer

George S. Han, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer

RE: Guidance for Facilities in Santa Clara County Regarding Patients Who Wish
to Spend April Holidays Outside the Facility

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1. Introduction

The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department (PHD) has received questions from Long-Term Care Facilities (LTCFs; including Skilled Nursing Facilities [SNFs]) regarding the upcoming April holidays of Passover, Good Friday, Easter, Cambodian New Year, and Ramadan. This memorandum provides guidance to facilities in the event that a resident wants to leave the facility to spend a holiday with family or friends. This guidance is mandatory.

2. Visitors Should Not be Allowed into the Facility to Celebrate Holidays

- a. The PHD has already issued guidance instructing facilities to **prohibit in-person visitation** unless very limited circumstances apply. (See section 4(b) of the [April 5, 2020 Memorandum to LTCFs.](#))
- b. Facilities should **not** make special exceptions to this prohibition for holidays.

3. Residents Should Not be Allowed to Leave the Facility to Celebrate Holidays

- a. Facilities should **not** allow residents to leave the facility to celebrate holidays with friends or family.
 - i. Gathering with people who do not live in your residence, even to celebrate a

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religious holiday, poses severe risk of COVID-19 transmission. The risk is especially high for those who live in congregate settings such as long-term care facilities.

- ii. Additionally, under the Public Health Officer's Order of March 31, 2020, any non-essential gathering between people who do not live in the same household is **legally prohibited**.
- b. If a resident wishes to leave the facility to celebrate a holiday, the facility should inform the resident that leaving to attend a holiday gathering is **not permitted**.

4. Facilities Should Make Videoconferencing and Telephone Equipment Readily Available to Residents on Holidays They Celebrate

- a. The PHD recognizes that prohibiting residents from leaving the facility and visitors from entering the facility may have an adverse effect on residents' mental health, especially on holidays that have cultural or religious significance.
- b. The PHD has already instructed facilities to make use of video chat and phone calls to enable remote visitation between residents and their loved ones. (See section 4(b)(i) of the [April 5, 2020 Memorandum to LTCFs](#).)
- c. Facilities should make video chat and phone call equipment even more available to residents on holidays they celebrate.
- d. Facilities should sanitize all video and phone equipment thoroughly after each use.

5. What to Do If a Resident Leaves the Facility Despite the Prohibition

- a. Before the resident leaves:
 - i. If a resident decides to leave your facility to gather with loved ones despite the prohibition, you will need to **decide whether you will allow the resident to return** to the facility after their gathering.
 - ii. If you decide that the resident will **not** be allowed back into the facility after leaving, you should inform them of this **before** they leave.
 - iii. Regardless of whether the resident will be allowed back into the facility after leaving, you should give the resident **strict instructions** before they leave, including that:
 - The resident should wear a face covering at all times while outside the facility.
 - Anyone the resident will see outside the facility should wear a face covering during their interactions.
 - All gatherings should follow strict social distancing protocol. Everyone should remain at least six feet away from each other. The resident should not hug, kiss, or touch anyone during the gathering.
 - The location where the gathering will be held should be sanitized thoroughly before the gathering begins. All surfaces (tables, chairs, doorknobs, etc.) should be sanitized.
 - Everyone attending the gathering, including the resident, should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after the gathering.

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- Everyone attending the gathering, including the resident, should avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
 - If anyone who was planning to attend the gathering shows any symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) before the gathering begins, they should not attend. If anyone develops symptoms during the gathering, the gathering should end immediately and everyone in attendance should wash their hands.
- b. After the resident returns:
- i. If you decide to allow the resident to return to your facility after their gathering, you will need to **isolate the resident for 14 days in a private room.**
 - ii. Do **not** allow the patient to leave the room for any reason until the isolation period is over.
 - iii. Facilities should be conducting daily screenings on *all* residents for any type of symptoms. These screenings should be increased to **twice per day** for any patient who left to attend a gathering and then returned.
 - A temperature check alone is insufficient.
 - In addition to temperature checks, screenings should also include asking or observing residents if they have *any* of the following symptoms:
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Night sweats
 - Sore throat
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Fatigue
 - Myalgias
 - Headaches
 - Change in mental status
 - Loss of sense of taste or smell
 - iv. If the patient develops any of the above symptoms:
 - **Call** the PHD at (408) 885-4214, ext. 3 (ask for Provider Branch).
 - Follow the reporting, isolation, and cohorting instructions in the [April 5, 2020 Memorandum to LTCFs](#).