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Dec. 16, 2020

To: People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family and friends (Case management entities: please share)  
From: Lilia Teninty, Director, Office of Developmental Disabilities Services  
Subject: Holiday Season and Keeping Loves Ones Safe

The holiday season is one many of us look forward to every year – a time to celebrate and be with family and friends.

However, this year we are celebrating while also knowing that we have to make changes to keep everyone safe and healthy.

The data is concerning. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have an increased risk of respiratory disease, influenza and pneumonia if they get COVID-19. Some states have had very [troubling outcomes](#), including people with I/DD being three times more likely to die if they get COVID-19.

People with I/DD are more likely to live in group settings and are also more likely to have multiple support staff, both factors that increase risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Before taking your relative or friend with an intellectual or developmental disability to a gathering outside their home, please consider these high risks faced by people with I/DD.

Try to think of creative ways to connect with loved ones during the holidays without putting your family member, or their housemates or provider staff, at risk. Host a virtual ugly sweater contest with family members or host a virtual potluck where everyone enjoys a favorite dish. This [article from CNN](#) has some other ideas.

If you choose to take a loved one with I/DD to your home or to another gathering, providers will be asked take steps to help keep everyone in the household safe, such as limiting contact between the individual and other household members for a period, staggering mealtimes and closely monitoring for signs of illness.

Future holiday seasons may include in-person gatherings like we are used to, but for now, we must do everything possible to keep our loved ones safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lilia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Lilia Teninty  
Director  
Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

*Previous Director's Messages are available at*  
[http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/SENIORS-  
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