



November 24, 2020

To: People with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family and friends

From: Lilia Teninty, Director, Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

Subject: Holiday Safety

Thanksgiving is a time of year that we normally cherish spending time with family and loved ones. However, this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the holidays will – and should – look different.

I know it is extremely difficult to be away from your family and loved ones during the holidays, but I ask that before taking your relative or friend with an intellectual or developmental disability to a gathering outside their home, please consider the high risks faced by people with I/DD.

This data is alarming and difficult to read. A recent article in [Disability Scoop](#) details that people with I/DD are three times more likely to die from COVID-19 than others. And people with Down syndrome face a [10-fold increased risk of death](#) from COVID-19.

At the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services, we are doing everything possible to keep people with I/DD safe and healthy during the pandemic. We ask that you do the same and 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. Some fun ideas may include doing a meal prep over video chat, visiting at an outdoor location while wearing masks or dropping a care package at your loved one's home. The Centers for Disease Control has other options and safety guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/thanksgiving.html>

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.

Hopefully we can all return at some point to family gatherings during the holidays in the way we are used to celebrating. For now, we ask that you do everything possible to keep the health and safety of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the providers who support them, at the forefront when planning your holiday celebrations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lilia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a trailing flourish.

Lilia Teninty
Director
Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

Previous Director's Messages are available at
[http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/SENIORS-
DISABILITIES/DD/Pages/messages.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/SENIORS-DISABILITIES/DD/Pages/messages.aspx)

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You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact the Oregon Office of Developmental Disabilities Services at 503-945-5811. We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.