**CORONAVIRUS: HOLIDAY GATHERING AND VISITATION CHANGES**

**SAMPLE MEDIA STATEMENT & TALKING POINTS**

*Updated: November 19, 2020*

**Media Statement:**

Due to the high county COVID-19 positivity rate, [Insert Organization Name] is discouraging residents from going to out holiday gatherings with families. These decisions were based on official guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) that was issued recently. It is reinforced by Iowa Governor Reynold’s recent [address to Iowans](https://governor.iowa.gov/press-release/icymi-gov-reynolds-delivers-address-to-iowans-on-covid19) and [proclamation](https://governor.iowa.gov/press-release/gov-reynolds-signs-new-proclamation-modifying-public-health-measures).

**Talking Points:**

* CMS Administrator Seema Verma published a [CMS](https://www.cms.gov/files/document/covid-facility-holiday-recommendations.pdf) alert to long-term care providers that included the following:
	+ “CMS recommends against residents leaving the nursing home during this Public Health Emergency. With the potential for a safe and effective vaccine on the immediate horizon, extra precautions now are essential to protect nursing home residents until a vaccine becomes available. Leaving the nursing home could increase a resident’s risk for exposure to COVID-19.”
	+ The alert also included a note to nursing home staff: “Staff should also use extra caution, especially during the holidays. Staff should follow the same recommendations for residents and families regarding gathering with their families and friends outside of work to protect the vulnerable residents they care for.”

*Soaring COVID-19 positivity rates:*

* As of November 19, 2020, all 99 counties in Iowa had positivity rates greater than 15%.
* In one month, Iowa has seen a 287% increase in Iowans testing positive for COVID-19.
* Hospitalizations of COVID-19 patients have increased 214% over the past month. Of those hospitalized, 74% are ages 60 and older.
* COVID-19 cases in long-term care now account for nearly half of all the COVID-19 related deaths in Iowa, totaling just shy of 1000 residents.
* Currently,1 out of every 4 long term care providers is experiencing an outbreak.

*Limited hospital capacity:*

* We are key partners in helping to reduce the need for overwhelmed hospitals.
* For those seniors who are afflicted with the virus but do not require hospitalization, or who have already successfully received hospitalization, our settings are the most appropriate care location for them to recover—in isolation with a designated staff team specifically to serve these individuals.
* The long-term care community has been involved in planning with the State, local officials, and health care providers to ensure we are continue to respond to this pandemic, provide treatment in the most appropriate location, decrease transmission of the virus, and not put our residents and staff in danger.