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Dear Families,

As the Commonwealth continues to manage the pandemic, and the presence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant that has spread across Massachusetts and the country, we are providing guidance to families to help keep your loved ones residing in long-term care facilities safe during visits. Of course, the very best way to minimize COVID-19 risk for you, your loved ones and friends is to get vaccinated and boosted and to not visit if you are not feeling well. As a reminder, the vaccines are effective against severe illness, hospitalization, and death.

People who reside in long-term care facilities are uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and may have health conditions that place them at a higher risk of becoming sick, or even severely ill, with COVID-19 despite being fully vaccinated.

We **strongly** recommend that you please follow these recommendations when visiting with your loved one in order to protect yourself, our long-term care residents, and their caregivers.

1. **Get vaccinated and boosted.** Individuals five years of age and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines and those 12 years and older are eligible for vaccine boosters. The best protection is to get vaccinated.
2. **Get tested prior to your visit regardless of your vaccination status.** Take advantage of the free, rapid point-of-care testing our long-term care facilities are offering prior to visiting your loved one in a long-term care facility. These tests are very accurate at determining if an individual is positive and in the contagious period of COVID-19 and can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to your loved one. It takes only a few minutes to add another level of protection.
3. **Follow all COVID-19 protocols in place while visiting your loved one.** These include:
 - If you are sick or have COVID-like symptoms, do not visit your loved one.
 - If you have recently been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should get tested and/or consider postponing your visit.
 - Wear a well-fitting facemask the entire time you are visiting your loved one.
 - Perform hand-hygiene before your visit, prior to and after any physical contact with your loved one, and upon leaving the building.



- Visit your loved one in accordance with the long-term care facility's policy. This may mean your visit takes place in a designated visitation area or your loved one's room depending on the circumstances at the facility.
- Go directly to your loved one's room or designated visitation area upon entry and directly exit the building after the visit. Do not visit other parts of the building or other residents.

The latest guidance on visitation for long-term care facilities can be found on the Department of Public Health's website. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-public-health-guidance-and-directives#health-care-organizations->

In addition to discussing with your loved one's facility, families of loved ones in long-term care settings can contact the Nursing Home Family Resource at 617-660-5399 for additional information.

Thank you for making the safety and well-being of your loved one and all of our long-term care residents a priority as we continue our efforts to combat the COVID-19 virus.

Sincerely,


Marylou Sudders