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**Dear Member:**

### **Community Engagement of Congregate Settings: Nursing Facilities, ICF-IIDs & Assisted Housing (Updated 2/1/2021)**

As MHCA previously reported, Maine DHHS has released updated guidance on surveillance testing in Nursing Homes (NFs) and Assisted Housing Communities (AHFs) that went into effect Monday, February 1, 2021. As outlined in this revised guidance, Maine Congregate Care settings should have reverted to a positivity rate standard that now meets or exceeds the minimum standard established by federal CMS.

This has also included the revision of the previously released [community engagement activities table](#) that is used to identify activities permitted within our homes based on a high ( $\geq 10$ ), moderate (5-10%) or low (up to 5%) positivity rate. At this time, community engagement activities continue to be based on conditions in the facility and in the county. These activities are outlined by DHHS in the table released with the updated guidance yesterday (Feb. 1, 2021). The table has been revised to reflect the change to positivity rate as the metric for community conditions. **The specific activities in the table have not changed from the prior guidance.**

As of data updated on [1/28/2021 by Maine CDC](#), ALL Maine counties EXCEPT ANDROSCOGGIN AND FRANKLIN are in the low range for positivity. For all levels of positivity, screening is required for anyone entering the facility. For counties with low positivity:

- Outdoor and Indoor Visitation is permitted AS LONG AS the facility is following current CMS guidance, limiting the number of visitors allowed at one time and restricting movement within facility. This includes pet visits but only pets to a single resident.
- Students, Volunteers and Non-Essential Personnel are permitted entry as long as not subject to work exclusion due to an exposure or showing signs & symptoms of COVID-19 after being screened.
- Communal Dining is permitted with social distancing (limited # people at each table with at least 6 feet between each person) and applies only to residents not in isolation or observation and not having suspected/confirmed COVID-19 status.
- Essential Medical appointments (escorted by the facility) are permitted and in the event these appointments are NOT ESCORTED by the facility residents should be managed as a "COVID-19 status unknown" individual upon return.
- Group Activities (Escorted by the Facility) are allowed for residents who have fully recovered from COVID-19 and for those not in isolation or observation or with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 status. Physical distancing among residents, appropriate hand hygiene, and use of face coverings (source control) apply.

- Community Support Day Activities are permitted but must follow applicable guidance.
- For Group Activities NOT Escorted by the Facility, this may occur but the resident should be managed as a "COVID-19 status unknown" individual upon return. See LTCF and AH FAQs 10/30/20 for further guidance on status "known" v. "unknown" in Assisted Housing Settings.

For counties in the moderate range for positivity please refer to this table for activities that are disallowed when above 5% positivity. MHCA advises that you check your county positivity frequently when assessing what activities are permissible depending on your county and facility specific circumstances.

### **Share Vaccination Message from Maine CDC Director Shah**

Maine CDC Director, Dr. Nirav Shah has been the consistent, expert voice guiding Maine through this public health emergency. We are grateful for his time and desire to speak to LTC employees directly on the importance of becoming vaccinated. **Please share this video message with your employees directly, on your website, and through your social media channels.**

The video is available on MHCA's YouTube channel and website. Watch here:

<https://youtu.be/G-uEXUibnY>

### **NHSN COVID-19 Vaccination Data Reporting to Inform Future Recommendations**

Long term care facilities can track weekly COVID-19 vaccination data for health care personnel and residents through the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). The modules are located under the Long-Term Care Facilities section titled [Surveillance for HCP & Resident COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

Why is this information important to upload into NHSN? Data helps to determine the effectiveness of the vaccines and the spread of the vaccination efforts. Information collected via the COVID-19 vaccination module on NHSN provides the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention critical information to help inform testing needs, reopening guidance, and visitation allowances among others. If you are not currently uploading your facility vaccination data to the [Surveillance for HCP & Resident COVID-19 Vaccination module](#), you are encouraged to do so as this information guides future vaccination efforts.

### **BD Requests Feedback on Long Term Care Provider Testing**

BD is seeking feedback from long term care providers on their experiences with COVID-19 testing through this [brief survey](#). They ask that you take five minutes to answer the survey about your current approaches to testing staff and residents, as well as any barriers you have been encountering. BD appreciates your feedback.

Sincerely,

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