Navigating the Holidays

The holidays can be a difficult time of year when a family member resides in a nursing home, and you are separated. During the current COVID-19 pandemic, it can be even more difficult. We all are faced with the challenge of celebrating the holidays in a new and creative way.

Make sure to check with your facility regarding their visitation status – all is dependent on the current COVID-19 exposure in the facility and community.

To help we recommend the following:

**Maintaining traditions:**
Maintaining family traditions is an important part of the holiday season and many find great peace and joy in the little things that were unique to your family. This is a time to continue those traditions.

- Continue traditions of singing carols/songs but over Facetime.
  - Gather family and friends over a video call to sing songs together in a safe way.
- Prepare a favorite meal or dessert for your loved one and deliver it to the MN Veterans Home.
  - Ensure you coordinate with the home for safe delivery.
- Deliver decorations to your Resident’s facility which staff can assist in putting in your Resident’s room.
- Facility holiday parties redesigned.
  - Typically, this was a time that families said thank you to staff.
  - If you would like to send holiday thanks to staff, please send a card or thoughtful note. Remember no personal gifts please.

**Make new traditions:**
Traditions are being bent, but not broken in this time of great stress and change. New traditions can be created to capture and express the current moment. Traditions sustain, shape and connect us – create new or build on the old this holiday season.

If you have questions, please contact your Social Worker or MVHCaregiverSupport@state.mn.us
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New traditions:

- Find and wrap a small gift, family picture, candy or note for each day in December for your loved one to open. Send the complete set up to the nursing home with instructions.
- Make a family DVD or CD that can be played in a resident’s room of their favorite holiday music, old family videos, messages from current loved ones recorded.
- Turn a family photo into a custom jigsaw puzzle for them to solve. Walmart, Shutterfly and Portrait Puzzles will help turn your favorite photo into a custom jigsaw puzzle.
- Cut out a large wall version shape of a traditional holiday picture or theme for your loved one’s room. Throughout the holiday season send decorations for your loved one to place on the cut out.
- Schedule additional telephone calls from family just to say “hello” and check in.
- Send copies of photos of old holiday gatherings, fun occasions, family trips, etc. via email to the Recreation Therapist on your unit. Write “do you remember Aunt Jane or who is this in the photo”? Use it during your iPad calls to discuss? A fun way to reminisce together.

Ensure that you review the following websites for information:

www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/holidays

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