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## **Iowa Health Care Association urges caution during holidays to protect long-term care residents and staff**

The Iowa Health Care Association (IHCA) is encouraging Iowa families to take precautions and follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) and the State of Iowa this holiday season to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 and to protect Iowa's long-term care residents and staff.

"We understand how difficult this year has been for all Iowans and their desire to visit with family and friends during the holidays. We have seen promising news on the vaccine front in recent days, meaning the endgame of this terrible ordeal for long-term care residents and families is in sight, and we can't let our guard down now," said Brent Willett, IHCA president and CEO. "With COVID-19 positivity rates at an all-time high, our long-term care residents are at extremely high risk to serious illness or death due to their age and pre-existing health conditions. This holiday season, the best way to show thanks to your loved ones, our Iowa seniors and the health care workers who care for them, is to follow the recommended safety guidelines."

The governor issued additional safety protocols on Nov. 16 effective through the Thanksgiving holiday, including the use of masks in indoor public spaces and limits on social, community, business, and leisure gatherings. CDC safety guidelines recommend that older individuals and those with medical conditions that put them at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should avoid in-person gatherings with people not in their household. For long-term care residents, this also means people who live outside of the facility where they reside.

"Given the high risk to our long-term care residents and the current extremely high community positivity levels, we encourage Iowa families to visit loved ones in long-term care through virtual means or outdoor visits when temperatures are appropriate," said Willett. "Long-term care facilities continue to work to protect the safety of our Iowa seniors, and need our support. Everyone must do their part, and exercise caution this holiday season, to help keep this virus from spreading to protect our elderly and those who care for them."

### **About the Iowa Health Care Association**

The Iowa Health Care Association (IHCA), along with its affiliates the Iowa Center for Assisted Living (ICAL) and Iowa Center for Home Care (IHC), is an integrated statewide association serving organizations that provide post-acute health care to improve the lives of Iowans, including nursing facilities, assisted living, residential care, senior living communities and home health agencies.

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