

# **Nursing home, senior living visitation to be prohibited in New Bedford to protect vulnerable residents from COVID-19**

Mayor Jon Mitchell and the Board of Health have issued strong new guidelines to protect the residents of nursing homes, long-term care and senior living facilities from the spread of COVID-19.

As the New England region, including New Bedford, enters its second surge, the percent positivity of COVID-19 tests has risen – up from 2% at the end of the summer to more than 7% now. Increases in positive cases among staff and residents nursing homes and senior living facilities across the region and in the city has led to new protections for residents.

Effective Monday, December 14, visitation at nursing homes, long-term care and senior living facilities will be prohibited, with the exception of compassionate care visits concerning end-of-life situations. Group activities and dining will be prohibited for residents, and stringent health protocols including routine inspections, temperature checks, additional hygiene measures, wellness checks, and notification to the Health Department of symptoms or suspected COVID-19 cases among residents, continue to be required of all such facilities in the city.

“Right now, the primary goal of government at every level should be to protect the most vulnerable among us such that they’ll have the opportunity to be vaccinated. Toward that end, and given continuing acceleration of disease

transmission, we are prohibiting visitation in New Bedford's senior living facilities until further notice. Today's order effectively reinstitutes a similar prohibition in place during the first surge," said Mayor Jon Mitchell. "This is no doubt difficult around the holidays, when all of us yearn to connect with our loved ones, but current circumstances demand that we redouble our efforts to protect those at highest risk. For seniors who do not reside in senior living facilities, and those with underlying health conditions, the best thing to do is to remain home unless it is imperative to go out, and tell prospective visitors that you'll see them after you get your vaccination. We want our loved ones protected and safe so that they are around for many more holidays to come."

The state's latest guidance allows for in-person visitation with social distancing, screening, mask-wearing, and other protective protocols. Rising cases have resulted in this additional public health protection in New Bedford.

Earlier this year, Mayor Mitchell and the Board of Health announced emergency orders to keep residents of all senior living settings safe through the requirement of stringent public health and sanitation requirements.