

UPDATED based on Governor Scott's EXECUTIVE ORDER Nov. 13, 2020

Messaging Toolkit for Schools: Holiday Travel and Gathering

Governor Scott issued a new [executive order](#) on Nov. 13, 2020 in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases in Vermont. We have revised this toolkit based on the new executive order, and we encourage you to share these messages with empathy and compassion for the families in your community.

What is Different?

- The Health Department **strongly advises against non-essential travel**, even within Vermont. All travel to and from Vermont requires quarantine. The only exception is [essential](#) travel.
- Under the executive order, you are **not allowed to gather with people you don't live with**. This includes gathering both inside and outside, and in public and private spaces. See allowances [here](#).
- **Visitors to Vermont** can only socialize with the people they are traveling with. They cannot gather with Vermonters in their home or elsewhere.

Why Were These New Limits Put in Place?

These **temporary** measures were put into place so that we can ensure hospitals are not overwhelmed, help schools continue to offer in-person instruction, and keep as many Vermonters working as possible. New [guidance](#) from the Agency of Education (Nov. 23, 2020) allows school districts to ask students and staff whether they participated in multihousehold social gatherings as part of the required daily Health Screenings for students and staff as specified in the [A Strong and Healthy Start](#) guidance.

Those who do gather will need to complete either a 14-day quarantine or a 7-day quarantine followed by a negative test, as long as they do not experience symptoms. [Quarantine](#) means staying home and away from others – for 14 days. Do not go to work or school, or out to do errands or recreation.

This helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 before a person knows they are sick, or if they are infected with the virus and don't have symptoms.

All Vermonters should continue to follow this basic guidance:

- When you go out to run errands, visit a trail or something else, a quick and easy way to measure the [risk](#) is to look for these three [things](#): masks on faces, six-foot spaces, uncrowded places.
- If you're sick, stay home.
- Get [tested](#) if you have [any symptoms](#) (even mild ones), are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, or have been at a social gathering or other risky situation.
- Get your [flu shot](#).

What Families Need to Know

Our individual choices can profoundly impact the health of our community in this pandemic. Last March, when schools and the economy shut down, we did not have choices about where we could go. Now we have more options, but making these decisions will affect others.

We have been able to re-open the economy and go back to school in-person, which is critical for the social and emotional development of children. When children attend school in-person, their parents and caregivers can go to work and keep the economy growing. But the current surge in cases means it's critical for us all to make safe choices, so we can help Vermont stay open.

Recent data have shown that social gatherings, both inside and outside, at homes, bars and social clubs, and among sports teams are currently driving outbreaks in Vermont. If we want to stop the virus from spreading, it makes sense to stop doing the activities that we know lead to transmission.

We have seen cases in schools — a reflection of what is happening in our communities right now. But importantly, instances of transmission of the virus in school have been limited. This shows schools can operate safely at this time.

Messages to Share with Families

Most of us have grown tired of the pandemic and the lifestyle changes we have made to stay safe and healthy. It is hard to balance our risk of getting sick with COVID-19 and our human need for in-person connection with family and friends, especially during the holidays. We are asking the school community — including students, parents/caregivers, and staff — to break from holiday traditions with loved ones who they may not have seen in-person for months, and this is hard. Acknowledging these challenges and disappointments will show compassion and help guide families through this pandemic.

- **Alternatives to travel or hosting people**

This year, many families will be doing things differently for the holidays. While sharing a meal virtually is not the same as celebrating in-person, it could be good enough to get us through 2020. We need to be patient with ourselves and each other through this challenging time. The sacrifices we are making now will benefit everyone in the future, especially if we can: keep schools open, support workers and protect hospitals from being over capacity.

- **Social media messages**

We're all tired of COVID-19 restrictions, but we still need to protect each other during the holiday season. Alternative ideas for making the holidays festive at home:

- Share a [virtual meal](#) on video (Platforms like [Zoom](#) and Microsoft [Teams](#) offer free video calling for Thanksgiving)
- Select a shared family recipe to cook for the holiday.
- Organize a Thanksgiving [food exchange](#).
- Make a meal to share with a neighbor or donate to your local [food shelf](#).
- Do a puzzle together. Check at your [public library](#) to borrow a puzzle for free.
- Go outside and walk/hike/sled/ski. Enjoy the free benefits of fresh air and exercise. Some public libraries let you borrow [snowshoes](#).
- Check with your local [United Way](#) and select a service project to do with your family.

- Videos to share
Please share these on your website and social media platforms.

Post Description	Links
<p>Safer Holidays During COVID-19 (Video) Given the recent rise in COVID-19 cases, Vermont has announced new policies around social gatherings and travel. #StaySafeVT</p>	<p>Facebook YouTube</p>

- Newsletter Drop-in

This is not what our school community had planned to be doing for the holidays. With the recent increase in cases of COVID-19, things changed quickly in Vermont, and now we need to adjust our plans. Many of us are disappointed to lose our traditional celebrations this year, but this is not going to last forever. You and your family can still make the holiday season festive. We encourage you to consider the following ideas:

- Share a [virtual meal](#) on video (Platforms like [Zoom](#) and Microsoft [Teams](#) offer free video calling for Thanksgiving)
- Select a shared family recipe to cook for the holiday.
- Organize a Thanksgiving [food exchange](#).
- Make a meal to share with a neighbor or donate to your local [food shelf](#).
- Do a puzzle together. Check at your [public library](#) to borrow a puzzle for free.
- Go outside and walk/hike/sled/ski. Enjoy the free benefits of fresh air and exercise. Some public libraries let you borrow [snowshoes](#).
- Check with your local [United Way](#) and select a service project to do with your family.

You can find more information on the Health Department's [website](#).

Images to Use

Sample images to use with the messages





Resources

- [COVID-19 in Vermont](#) (Department of Health)
- [Holiday celebrations during COVID](#) (CDC)
- [Information for Vermont's businesses](#) (ACCD)
- [Information for Vermont's schools](#) (AOE)