



**Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols to Minimize
Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 Virus**

Issued - March 12, 2020

The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has previously implemented a broad range of enhanced protocols to protect the health, safety and welfare of our Veteran Patients, Veteran Residents and Staff in response to the COVID-19 virus. Each day over the past several weeks the DVA has continually reevaluated and adjusted these protocols consistent with the directives and guidelines from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, Office of the Governor, Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Federal VA.

This updated set of protocols incorporates and updates previous measures and adds new measures in response to the changing circumstances related to the COVID-19 virus in order to protect the health, safety and welfare of our Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff.

The following protocol updates are effective immediately:

I. Healthcare Center (HCC)

A. Travel for HCC Patients

1. All offsite travel for medical/clinical purposes shall be approved subject to the standard HCC process.
2. All non-medical/clinical travel (i.e. "leisure travel") is subject to a case-by-case review to determine the clinical risk to the Veteran Patient and HCC patients as a whole.
 - i. The case-by-case review will evaluate the location of the offsite activity, with whom the Veteran Patient will travel, be in contact with, and the length of offsite activity. If the assessment team determines that the activity presents an elevated risk for exposure to COVID-19, flu and virus or other illnesses of concern, the offsite activity will be denied.
 - ii. A Veteran Patient who refuses to provide the information necessary to evaluate the risk of offsite travel will be denied authorization for the requested offsite activity.
 - iii. Upon return from approved off campus travel, the Veteran Patient shall be screened by HCC staff to determine whether the Veteran Patient's actual travel constitutes an elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 and, if so, the Veteran Patient shall be placed in HCC mandatory quarantine for 14 days.

B. No Visitors to HCC

1. No persons shall be permitted to visit the HCC except for attorneys, state marshals, conservators, and visitors to those Veteran Patients deemed to be in an end-of-life health state, as determined by HCC staff. All such allowed visitors must contact the HCC in advance to schedule their visit and are limited to access the specific Veteran Patient's room.
2. Visitors to Veteran Patients in an end-of-life health state will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by HCC. The duration of visits, number of visitors, and frequency of visits will be determined and approved case-by-case by HCC staff.
3. All such allowed visitors shall wear any personal protective equipment as directed by HCC staff in accordance with CDC guidelines.
4. Any allowed visitors who refuse to abide by these measures will be denied entry to the HCC and removed from the DVA Campus.
5. DVA Veteran Residents, Veteran Vocational Therapeutic Program participants, DVA Volunteers and DVA Staff who are not required to work in the HCC (Non-HCC Staff) are subject to this restriction.

C. Admissions to HCC

1. All new admissions are suspended except for those patients who are transferring from a bonafide Community or VA healthcare facility once medical personnel at the facility of origin confirm in writing (email acceptable) that the patient is not at risk for COVID-19.
2. Any new admission is subject to a quarantine protocol for 14 days upon admission and upon showing no symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19, the patient will be released from quarantine.

II. Residential Facility

A. Travel

1. Veteran Residents are required to complete an Enhanced Travel Screening Information Form before leaving campus and upon return to campus so that Residential staff may evaluate the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.
2. If, upon return to the DVA Campus, a Veteran Resident presents an elevated risk of having been exposed to the COVID-19 virus, the Veteran Resident shall be placed in quarantine for 14 days. Refusal to remain in quarantine shall be grounds for immediate involuntary discharge from the DVA Residential Program and notification to State health officials of the Veteran Resident's departure from the DVA Campus.

B. Community Events

1. Travel to community based events organized by or coordinated with the DVA will be evaluated case-by-case to determine if the event poses an elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19, and if so, the event will be canceled or rescheduled if organized by the DVA. If the DVA is not the event organizer, Veteran Residents will be informed that they should not attend the event.
2. Any Veteran Resident who attend such an event and is determined to have an elevated risk of having been exposed to the COVID-19 virus shall be placed in quarantine for 14 days. Refusal to remain in quarantine shall be grounds for immediate involuntary discharge from the DVA Residential Program and notification to State health officials of the Veteran's departure from the DVA Campus.

C. Admissions to Residential Facility

1. All new admissions will be suspended except for those screened and assessed by residential staff for risk of exposure to COVID-19, which may require medical documentation or medical evaluations at the request of residential staff clearing the Veteran for admission. Only those Veterans deemed not to at risk for exposure for COVID-19 will be admitted. All other admissions will be suspended.
2. Any new admission who refuses to comply with the COVID-19 risk assessment and screening as required by the residential staff or fails to supply medical documentation or submit to medical evaluations as requested shall be denied admission.
3. Any new admission may be subject to a quarantine protocol at the request of residential staff for 14 days upon admission, and upon showing no symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19, the resident will be released from quarantine. Refusal to remain in quarantine shall be grounds for immediate involuntary discharge from the DVA Residential Program and notification to State health officials of the Veteran's departure from the DVA Campus.

III. Visitors to Campus

A. Vendors

1. No food or other vendor deliveries are permitted to the DVA Campus except for those deliveries by vendors in support of DVA operations. This means that no DVA Veteran Resident, Patient or Staff may order delivery of any food or other items to the DVA Campus except by common carrier.
2. This restriction prohibits meeting any such prohibited vendors at or near the DVA security gate. DVA Security are directed to turn away any such vendors immediately.
3. The DVA is not liable for any losses by any person on the DVA Campus who orders food or other deliveries in violation of this protocol.

B. NON-HCC Visitors

1. All visitors to the DVA Campus shall be verbally screened by Security at the entrance gate for risk elements of possible exposure or symptoms of COVID-19.
2. Any visitor who refuses to respond to the screening questions shall be denied entry to the Campus.
3. Visitors who are deemed a risk shall be denied entry to the Campus.
4. Visitors to the DVA Campus are restricted to those persons who have official business with the DVA or any DVA tenant organization. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis as determined by DVA senior staff. Persons who can otherwise conduct their business with the DVA or its tenant organizations by electronic means or by mail shall be required to use such means in lieu of visiting the DVA Campus. Visitors can refer to the DVA website for contact information: <https://portal.ct.gov/dva>

IV. Group Events and Training Sessions on Campus

- A. The DVA is reviewing all planned group events and training activities by the DVA, State and municipal agencies, and community based entities on campus.
- B. Those events which may present a heightened risk of exposure to COVID-19 will be either rescheduled or canceled.

V. CDC Guidelines

- A. The DVA has instructed all Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff to follow all CDC hygienic guidelines to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including but not limited to, washing hands thoroughly and often, using hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available, covering cough and sneeze, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, and social distancing when possible.
- B. These enhanced hygienic procedures have been communicated by hardcopy, electronically, and verbally in addition to posting signs across campus in each building.
- C. The DVA has increased disinfecting and cleaning on campus.

These protocols are temporary enhanced protective measures, subject to ongoing review and updates and will remain in effect until rescinded or amended by the DVA Commissioner, consistent with further directives and guidance from Federal, State and healthcare officials and clinical best practices based on developments regarding the COVID-19 virus.

Issued,



Thomas J. Saadi
Commissioner

Date: March 12, 2020