HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS TO
MITIGATE RISK OF EXPOSURE TO COVID-19

RE-ISSUANCE AND UPDATE EFFECTIVE: NOVEMBER 30, 2020

In response to the COVID-19 health pandemic and pursuant to Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 27-102l(d)-151, the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) began implementing in early March 2020, a broad range of COVID-19 mitigation protocols to mitigate the risk of exposure of Veterans and Staff to COVID-19. These protocols are aggregated in an omnibus entitled “Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols to Minimize Risk of Exposure to COVID-19” (also known as “COVID-19 Mitigation Protocols”). The DVA continually updated these existing protocols consistent with new 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.

As the State of Connecticut moved to a transitional re-opening process, the DVA began issuing Modifications to the Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols, which modifications are aggregated in a separate Modifications omnibus.

The most recent version of the Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols Modifications is dated October 2, 2020. The most recent version of the Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols was issued on April 29, 2020 and amended on June 26, 2020 to cross reference the Modifications thereto.

This updated omnibus and protocols are being re-issued pursuant to the authority granted to the Commissioner through Executive Orders of the State of Connecticut and Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Section 27-102l(d)-151. It is intended to supersede and replace all prior versions of the Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols and the Modifications thereto and to aggregate the current protocols in place. As such, this document will continue to be updated and adjusted based on current applicable guidance, directives and circumstances.

The following protocols are effective as of the above date:

I. HEALTHCARE CENTER (HCC)

A. TRAVEL FOR HCC PATIENTS

1. All offsite travel for medical/clinical purposes is subject to the standard HCC review process for approval.

2. Veteran Patients and/or Family Member or Responsible Party are required to fill out an Off-Campus Medical Travel Form.
3. All non-medical/clinical travel (i.e. “leisure travel”) is not permitted at this time. Exceptions are subject to case-by-case review to determine the clinical risk to the Veteran Patient and HCC patients as a whole.
   a. 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.
   b. 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.
   c. 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 is subject to protective isolation up to 14 days as appropriate whether or not showing symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19.
   d. The Veteran Patient will be released from isolation upon showing no symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19 consistent with CDC and State DPH guidance and after being cleared by the HCC medical director or patient’s attending physician.

4. All travel is subject to any Executive Orders of the Governor of the State of Connecticut regarding COVID-19 travel restrictions and additional DVA health and safety restrictions on any non-essential travel as such travel presents an elevated risk of potential exposure to COVID-19. Any request for travel that does not comply with Executive Orders or the State of Connecticut Travel Advisory or is deemed to present an elevated risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 will be denied.

5. These travel provisions are subject to temporary complete prohibitions on travel by order of the Commissioner; any such prohibition is subject to ongoing review by the Commissioner.

B. HCC VISITATION FOR VETERAN PATIENTS

1. Pursuant to orders of the Department of Public Health, visitation with Veteran Patients and their family or other responsible party are permitted at the HCC.

2. Visits with Veteran Patients may be in the form of a Window Visit, Outdoor Visit, or Indoor Visit and will be conducted in accordance with HCC policy and procedures, which may be updated and amended from time-to-time.

3. All indoor visits will be suspended in the event of a COVID-19 positive Veteran Patient or Staff. All visits regardless of type may be suspended based on determination of Commissioner upon review of COVID-19 testing and results.

4. All visits must be scheduled in advance and will take place between the hours of 9:00 AM and 2:30 PM, five days per week, including one weekend day, as scheduled by HCC Staff. No more than two visitors may participate in a visit at one time. Each visit may not exceed thirty minutes. No unscheduled visits are permitted.

5. Veteran Patients are limited to two visits per week. Visits with Veteran Patients may be in the form of a Window Visit, an Outdoor Visit, an Indoor Visit, or any combination thereof, with the total number of visits not to exceed two per week.
6. Visitors scheduled to participate in the HCC visitation will be allowed entry to the DVA Campus subject to screening by DVA Security for signs and risk factors for COVID-19. Any visitor deemed to be at risk will be denied entry to Campus and will be asked to reschedule the visit.

7. Only negative COVID-19 Veteran Patients may participate in visits. All visitors entering the HCC for indoor visits are encouraged to be tested for COVID-19 two to three days prior to the visit and provide proof of negative test results and date of test.

8. The visitors will be limited to the location of their visit at the HCC and are not permitted to drive around the DVA Campus or otherwise walk around the inside of the HCC other than going to the location of the visit.

9. Visitors must wear a mask while on campus according to Executive Orders and State of Connecticut DPH and CDC guidelines for wearing of masks. Visitors must also follow all policy, guidelines and directives provided by the HCC regarding the visit. Any visitor who refuses will be asked to leave the DVA Campus and the visit ended.

C. ADMISSIONS TO HCC

1. The HCC is accepting regular new admissions. All pre-pandemic regular admissions policies and procedures remain in place and are hereby supplemented with the additional criteria herein.

2. As a member of the admissions committee, the Infection Control Nurse shall monitor the status of communicable infections, including COVID-19, to determine best placement, including the need for isolation and/or cohorting of each patient.

3. All new admissions require a negative COVID-19 test completed 24-48 hours prior to admission and are subject to a 14-day protective monitoring isolation period in the HCC Infectious Disease Isolation and Recovery Unit upon admission to the HCC. New admissions may be subject to additional COVID-19 testing if deemed appropriate by the HCC Medical staff.

D. COVID-19 AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE ISOLATION AND RECOVERY UNIT

1. The HCC has established a COVID-19 and Infectious Disease Isolation and Recovery Unit (“Isolation Unit”) for Veteran Patients under protective monitoring upon admission or returning from acute care or off-campus travel, investigation for COVID-19 and confirmed COVID-19 Veteran Patients, which is located in the B Upper (‘Bravo’) Unit of the HCC.

2. All Veteran Patients shall remain in the Isolation Unit pursuant to the direction of the HCC Medical staff consistent with CDC and State DPH guidelines and shall be released from isolation in accordance with said guidelines in conjunction with assessment by the Veteran Patient’s attending physician and HCC Medical staff.

3. All Veteran Patients, including those in the Isolation Unit requiring a higher level of care, will be safely discharged to an acute care facility that may address their level of care needs.
4. Staff shall follow procedures in place for sterilization and cleaning of the Isolation Unit and rooms of Veteran Patients who test COVID-19 positive and to provide Veteran Patients with meals and other needs services and support in their rooms.

5. All staff entering the Isolation Unit of the HCC shall wear proper Personal Protective Equipment as directed by HCC leadership.

II. RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

A. VETERAN RESIDENT TRAVEL

1. Veteran Residents may travel off-campus following regular travel procedures in effect prior to the pandemic. This involves swiping in and out, passes for overnight travel, and compliance with all DVA accountability procedures. The regular travel procedures are supplemented with the criteria herein.

2. All Veteran Residents returning to campus from overnight travel must complete the post-travel COVID-19 screening form with Residential Staff. Any residents with symptoms or risk factors of COVID-19 may be subject to isolation and must self-isolate in their room until further guidance is received from DVA clinical staff which may include mandatory isolation in the designated Residential Isolation Unit.

3. Consistent with Executive Orders issued by Governor Lamont and protocols issued by Commissioner Thomas J. Saadi, Veteran Residents must comply with the following while traveling off the DVA Campus:
   a. No more than two Veteran Residents may travel in a single private vehicle;
   b. Facial coverings are encouraged for wear at all times and required for wear in accordance with Governor Lamont’s Executive Orders;
   c. Social distancing of at least six feet between persons, except as otherwise stated herein, to be observed at all times;
   d. Veteran Residents shall comply with Executive Orders and DECD Sector Rules regarding the number of people permitted in gatherings indoors and outdoors.
   e. Personal hygiene – wash hands frequently, use hand sanitizer when hand washing is not an option and wash clothing at high temperature settings;
   f. Adhere to all reopening guidelines, Executive Orders, laws, and regulations for visiting any public or private facility while on pass.
   g. Strongly encouraged not to travel to any locations on the State of Connecticut Travel Advisory List or to any location that may be exempt from the CT Travel Advisory List but is otherwise identified as a high-infection state.

4. Any resident who travels to any location on the State of Connecticut Travel Advisory List or to any location that is identified as a high-infection state even if exempt from the Travel Advisory is subject to mandatory isolation and COVID-19 testing upon return to Campus. This includes all travel to such locations whether or not it is overnight. Any Veteran Residents who travel to such locations are required to self-isolate upon return to Campus in their rooms to remain there until they are cleared by the Veterans Outpatient Clinic (VOC) after testing negative for the COVID-19, which may include up to two negative tests, or at the direction of the Commissioner. Any Veteran Resident who fails to follow self-isolation procedures or presents an elevated risk of COVID-19 exposure
shall be moved to and remain in the Isolation Unit until cleared by the Veterans Outpatient Clinic (VOC) after testing negative for the COVID-19, which may include up to two negative tests, or at the direction of the Commissioner.

5. Any Veteran Resident in the Veteran Vocational Therapeutic Program (VVTP) is not permitted to participate in the VVTP assignments while in self-isolation or the Isolation Unit.

6. Veteran Residents are to receive ongoing verbal and written education by the DVA Residential Staff on best practices and following the COVID-19 mitigation directives and guidelines from federal and state authorities while on and off Campus. Veteran Residents shall continue to be screened for signs and risk factors for COVID-19 and will be tested in accordance with the DVA’s Commissioner’s directives with a focus on point prevalence testing to identify positive cases as early as possible.

7. Upon return to campus, all Veteran Residents’ vehicles, bags, containers, etc. . . . are subject to visual inspection by Security pursuant to existing protocols.

8. All travel off-campus is subject to temporary complete prohibitions on travel by order of the Commissioner pursuant to statutory and regulatory authority and the Governor’s Executive Orders. Any restrictions on Veteran Resident travel will be based on the need to protect the health, safety and welfare of Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff during the pandemic. Any such prohibition is subject to regular review by the Commissioner, and notice will be provided to the residents informing the residents of the prohibition and review by the Commissioner.

9. During periods of time in which off-campus travel is prohibited, the DVA will implement procedures for Veteran Residents to obtain essential personal items including provision of donated items and limited supervised transportation of small groups of Veteran Residents to shop for essential items and access banking services. During said trips, all Veterans are required to wear PPE, maintain social distancing and follow CDC hygiene guidelines upon return to Campus. The DVA will keep track of the residents who have participated in the supervised shopping trips should the information be needed for contact tracing.

B. RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

1. All residential facilities i.e., the fitness center, library, Winner’s Circle and pool/game room will be operated according to DECD Sector Rules for Reopening Connecticut.

2. These facilities are subject to complete closures by Sector Rules, Executive Order, or by order of the Commissioner.

C. INSPECTIONS OF VEHICLES AND RESIDENTIAL LIVING AREAS

1. The DVA Staff is cognizant of the increased stress and related mental health issues impacting our Veterans related to COVID-19 which can lead to increased substance abuse, as evidenced by recent events involving contraband on the Campus.

2. In order to protect the health, safety and welfare of our Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff, the DVA has implemented a Temporary Residential Inspection Policy which
supplements the inspection protocols in the current Residential Omnibus Policy Update dated September 4, 2020 which includes the use of law enforcement K-9 units.

3. The Temporary Residential Inspection Policy is subject to ongoing review and adjustment at the direction of the DVA Commissioner.

D. COVID-19 AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE ISOLATION AND RECOVERY UNIT

1. The DVA has established a COVID-19 and Infectious Disease Isolation and Recovery Unit (Isolation Unit) in the Residential Facility. This Isolation Unit includes a self-contained HVAC system and lavatory and is for COVID-19 positive Veteran Residents, those with COVID-19 symptoms awaiting test results, those identified through contact tracing and who are awaiting test results, new admissions and those who have returned from off Campus Travel and medical admissions. DVA clinical staff will take appropriate measures regarding referral for hospitalization if necessary.

2. Meals, medication, and hydration is provided to Veterans in the Isolation Unit and each Veteran is monitored.

3. The DVA Facilities Staff has implemented sterilization methods and products and utilize PPE as needed for cleaning of the Isolation Unit.

4. Those Veterans in the Isolation Unit without a mobile phone, smart device or laptop computer will be provided with a phone and smart tablet based on availability.

5. All staff entering the COVID-19 Isolation Unit shall wear proper PPE.

E. ADMISSIONS AND VISITORS TO RESIDENTIAL FACILITY

1. The Residential Program is accepting new admissions. All pre-pandemic regular admissions policies and procedures remain in place and are hereby supplemented with the additional criteria herein.

2. All new admissions are required to have a negative COVID-19 test within 48 hours prior to the date of admission. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for those new admissions with extenuating circumstances and are unable to provide proof of a negative test within the required timeframe. All such exceptions are subject to approval by the Commissioner.

3. New admissions are subject to COVID-19 testing and protective isolation in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit up to 14 days. Said new admissions must remain in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit until cleared by the VOC based on negative COVID-19 testing as indicated herein.

4. New admissions shall be tested for COVID-19 on the day of their admission or as soon as possible thereafter and tested again two days following their first test by the DVA.

5. New admissions will be released from the Isolation Unit only if both tests conducted by the DVA are negative. If the Veteran Resident tests positive, then the Veteran Resident must remain in isolation until the Veteran Resident has two consecutive negative tests
within a 72-hour period, with the second test given after 48 hours of the first negative test.

6. All visitors are restricted from the Residential Facility. This includes Veteran Patients, any persons otherwise lawfully on the DVA Campus such as members and clients of DVA tenant organizations, and DVA Staff not assigned or working in the Residential Facility. Exceptions may be made by the DVA Senior Staff on a case-by-case basis.

F. FAILURE TO FOLLOW ISOLATION PROCEDURES IS A MAJOR VIOLATION OF DVA RULES

1. Veteran Residents may be directed by DVA Staff to self-isolate in their rooms or to isolate in the Isolation Unit according to the protocols herein and dependent upon the particular circumstances.

2. Failure to remain in isolation as directed by DVA Staff is a major disciplinary violation and grounds for imposition of discipline up to and including involuntary discharge from the DVA Residential Program. If the Veteran Resident presents a health or safety risk to others the involuntary discharge may result in the immediate removal without a pre-removal appeal and will result in notification to State health officials of the Veteran Resident’s departure from the DVA Campus.

III. MEAL SERVICE IN MAIN DINING ROOM (MDR)

A. DVA Food Services, in coordination with Residential Programs and Services, has implemented procedures in the Main Dining Room to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

B. These procedures include spacing of tables and chairs, installing protective Plexiglas shields in food service areas, when necessary and with the approval of the Commissioner, staggered mealtimes for Residential Wings.

C. The schedule and assignment of Wings shall be implemented by Residential Services and coordinated with Food Services.

D. DVA Staff may access the MDR subject to approval by their senior manager. DVA Staff who have not been approved may not access the MDR. Approved DVA Staff who wish to access the MDR shall purchase meal tickets in accordance with protocols established by the Director of Food Services and the Director of Residential Programs and Services.

IV. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

A. Group recreational activities for Veterans are limited to activities in which social distancing can be followed. All activities must follow CDC and State DPH guidelines for hand hygiene, wearing of masks, social distancing, Executive Orders and DECD Sector Rules for gatherings of people.

B. All travel to community-based groups, events or activities organized by or coordinated with the DVA are limited to activities that follow CDC and State DPH guidelines for hand hygiene, wearing of masks, physical distancing, Executive Orders and DECD Sector Rules for gatherings of people. If an event or activity off campus is not
organized or coordinated with the DVA, the DVA shall confirm COVID-19 mitigation protocols are being followed before participating in the event or activity.

C. The DVA will continue to develop alternative and modified recreational opportunities on the DVA Campus that are compliant with recommended social distancing.

V. MEETINGS, GROUP EVENTS, ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS

A. DVA OR TENANT MEETINGS, GROUP EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, AND INTERVIEWS ON CAMPUS

1. All meetings, group events, interviews or activities on Campus conducted for operations of the DVA or its tenant organizations shall continue to be conducted electronically to the maximum extent possible.

2. DVA Personnel may conduct meetings, interviews and other similar activities via alternative electronic platforms such as FaceTime, Video Teleconference and other similar means on both State and personal equipment. An employee who wishes to use personal equipment must request and receive approval according to DVA’s Personal Wireless Device Policy dated November 4, 2020.

3. While telephonic and video interface is allowed on personal IT equipment after being approved according to the DVA Personal Wireless Device Policy, no materials, documents or other records are to be made or retained on personal IT equipment.

4. In-person interviews may be conducted after maximizing electronic platforms subject to approval by the Commissioner. The hiring manager shall request approval in advance and must conduct the interviews in accordance with CT DPH and CDC guidelines for masks, social distancing and hygiene. All in-person interviews shall be conducted in outdoor locations on the DVA Campus when weather permits.

5. All in-person meetings, group events, or activities on Campus that are outside the normal operations of the DVA or its tenant organizations must be pre-approved by the Commissioner.

6. All meetings, group events, or activities on Campus that are not conducted electronically must follow all CT DPH and CDC guidelines for masks, social distancing and hygiene, Executive Orders, DECD Sector Rules for gatherings of people, and COVID-19 mitigation protocols.

B. STAFF BREAKROOMS

1. General seating areas are not permitted in staff breakrooms and staff is not to congregate in groups during breaks. If it is necessary to provide a place for staff to eat because they do not have an office or other appropriate area to eat, then no more than one chair is permitted at a table, and any persons in the breakroom must remain 6 feet apart if eating.

2. Unless there are established and enforced cleaning procedures, there shall be no common use coffee machines. Microwaves and refrigerators may be used however,
there must be signage and cleaning materials enabling those using the appliance to wipe them down before and after use.

3. There shall be no general congregating in break rooms or other locations.

C. MEETINGS, GROUP EVENTS, TRAINING ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS BY OTHERS

1. All group events, meetings and training activities on the DVA Campus by State and municipal agencies, and community-based entities are subject to restrictions until further notice.

2. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis. Any requests for exceptions subject to reviewed and approval by the Commissioner. Any non-DVA use of DVA facilities must follow the established DVA Facility Use Request (FUR) procedures which include the requirement that the requesting entity’s COVID-19 mitigation protocols must be submitted along with the FUR for review by the Commissioner.

D. LIMITED ACCESS TO CAMPUS

1. Any person entering Campus for a group event, meeting, interview or training activity that has been pre-approved by the Commissioner may enter Campus subject to screening as provided herein and is limited to the location of the purpose of their visit. They are not permitted to enter other areas of Campus but are restricted to the location of the interview, meeting, group event or activity on Campus.

2. DVA Staff must notify Safety and Security in advance of any visitors arriving to campus pursuant to these protocols herein. All visitors entering Campus will be screened by DVA Security for signs and risk factors for COVID-19, and anyone deemed to be at risk will be denied entry to Campus.

VI. VISITORS GENERALLY RESTRICTED FROM CAMPUS

A. VISITORS RESTRICTED FROM CAMPUS/ALL VISITORS SCREENED

1. Unless specifically permitted herein or approved as an exception by the Commissioner, no visitors shall be permitted at the DVA Campus. Only persons on campus for operational purposes of the DVA or its tenant organizations are permitted. Requests for exception are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Commissioner.

2. Persons with official business with the DVA or its tenant organizations may be permitted on campus only if they are unable, as determined by the DVA, to reschedule or conduct their business by electronic means or by mail. Any such person shall be screened by Security at the entrance gate for signs and risk elements of possible exposure or symptoms of COVID-19. Any visitor who refuses to respond to the screening questions shall be denied entry to the DVA Campus. Any such person deemed a risk by the DVA shall be denied entry to the campus. Visitors can refer to the DVA website for contact information: https://portal.ct.gov/dva. These protocols apply to persons being interviewed for possible employment at the DVA.
B. DROP OFF OF PERSONAL ITEMS FOR VETERAN PATIENTS AND RESIDENTS

1. To facilitate the safe and secure provision of personal items to DVA Veteran Patients and Residents while minimizing contact between DVA Security and third parties, any person dropping off items must contact the HCC, Residential Programs or Administration in advance to inform the appropriate parties of the items being dropped off and for whom they are intended. If Security is not able to confirm this information, the items are not permitted to be dropped off.

2. All permitted items are to be labeled and provided to DVA security pursuant to enhanced safety protocols, which may include placing the item in a bin at the DVA main entrance. The drop-off will be documented by Security to include name and plate number of vehicle to the greatest extent possible. The items will be delivered to appropriate parties by HCC and Residential staff based on availability.

3. The DVA will effectuate the delivery of such items in a timely fashion subject and subordinate to health and safety protocols and DVA operational needs.

4. Veteran Residents are asked to follow these procedures for dropping off items to Campus. Residents may drop off items in the bins at the DVA main entrance for pick-up by others and may retrieve items from the bins left for the residents by following these procedures and adhering to social distancing recommendations. All items dropped off or picked up by Veteran Residents are subject to inspection by Security.

C. FOOD AND VENDOR DELIVERIES PERMITTED

1. For All Vendor and Food Deliveries:
   a. Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff are permitted to order food and receive vendor deliveries to the DVA Campus pursuant to these protocols herein.
   b. Deliveries may be made during the hours of 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM only. All attempted deliveries to the DVA Campus after 9:00 PM and before 9:00 AM will be denied access to the Campus by DVA Security.
   c. All food and vendor deliveries must be from restaurants or food establishments licensed by applicable state and local health officials.
   d. DVA Security will permit the vendors to enter Campus to drive to the designated areas to meet the Veteran Resident or Staff for the delivery. Vendors are not permitted to drive around Campus and are restricted to driving to and from the designated areas for the delivery. DVA Security will not be responsible to notify any party when a vendor has arrived, and DVA Security will not accept or handle any food or vendor deliveries.
   e. All vendors will be subject to screening by DVA Security for signs and risk factors for COVID-19. Any vendor attempting to make a delivery who is deemed at risk will be denied entry to Campus.
   f. The DVA is not liable for any losses by any person on the DVA Campus who orders a delivery and does not receive the food delivery due to failure to follow these protocols.

2. Deliveries for Veteran Residents and DVA Staff (Non-HCC Staff):
   a. Veteran Residents or DVA Staff placing a food order must meet the vendors outside in two designated areas adjacent to the Residential Facility as follows: (1) The
parking area in between E-Wing and F-Wing outside of what is known as “Rocking Chair Alley” on the first floor of the Residential facility; and (2) The parking area in between A-Wing and B-Wing outside of what is known as “Rocking Chair Alley” on the first floor of the Residential facility.

b. The Veteran Resident or DVA Staff must meet the vendor in a timely manner to receive the delivery. Vendors are not permitted to enter inside the Residential Facility and must remain outside the facility in the designated areas.

c. The Veteran Resident or Staff ordering food is solely responsible for coordinating meeting the vendor at the designated area outside either Rocky Chair Alley. DVA Residential Staff is not responsible for notifying any persons when a vendor arrives for delivery.

d. DVA Residential Staff is not permitted to receive any food or vendor deliveries on behalf of Veteran Residents and will not physically handle any deliveries. Veteran Residents or Staff are responsible to meet the vendor at the designated areas or to send someone on their behalf to meet the vendor at the designated areas to accept the delivery.

3. **For Veteran Patients and HCC Staff:**
   a. The Veteran Patient ordering the delivery must manage the order independently. The preferred method of payment is via a credit card over the phone. HCC Staff will not handle any money on behalf of Veteran Patients and will not receive, place or handle any orders on behalf of Veteran Patients.
   b. Delivery is to be made outside the front door of the HCC. The Veteran Patient or HCC Staff who placed the order must meet the vendor in a timely manner to receive the delivery. Vendors are not permitted to enter inside the HCC and must remain outside the front door of the HCC.
   c. The Veteran Patient or Staff ordering the delivery is solely responsible for coordinating meeting the vendor at the designated area outside the front door of the HCC. HCC Staff is not responsible for notifying any persons when a vendor arrives for delivery.
   d. HCC Staff is not permitted to receive any food or vendor deliveries on behalf of Veteran Patients and will not physically handle any deliveries. Veteran Patients or Staff ordering the delivery are solely responsible to meet the vendor at the designated area outside the HCC front door area to accept the delivery.
   e. Upon receipt of the delivery, Veteran Patients must return to their rooms for consumption as communal dining is not permitted.

D. **TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS TO CAMPUS**

1. Uber vehicles, taxi-cabs or other non-state government transportation providers from Campus are permitted and may be utilized by any Veteran Resident in accordance with these protocols herein.

2. The hours of operation for transportation providers on Campus are not limited.

3. The transportation provider is not permitted to drive throughout the DVA Campus but must go straight to the Transportation Center after being cleared by DVA Security. The providers must wait in their vehicle for the Veteran Resident.

4. Veteran Residents who ordered the transportation service must meet the provider at the Transportation Center in a timely manner.
5. The Veteran Resident is solely responsible for coordinating meeting the provider in the Transportation Center. DVA Security Staff is not responsible for notifying any persons when a transportation provider arrives.

6. All drivers are subject to screening by DVA Security for risk of exposure or symptoms of COVID-19 and may be turned away from Campus by DVA Security if deemed to be a risk.

7. The DVA is not liable for any losses by any person who orders a transportation service and is not able to use the service due to the driver being denied access to Campus by Security or for a failure to follow these protocols.

E. VOLUNTEERS TO CAMPUS

1. Individual and organized groups of volunteers, subject to a recommendation by the DVA Office of Community Outreach and approval by the Commissioner, will be allowed access to the DVA Campus for specified periods of time for particular projects.

2. All such volunteers must follow COVID-19 mitigation protocols while on the DVA property, including DVA protocols and the group or organization’s COVID-19 mitigation protocols. All such volunteers must follow all CT DPH and CDC recommendations for hygiene, social distancing, and masks and all applicable Executive Orders, and DECD Sector Rules for gatherings of people. Prior to being allowed on Campus, all volunteer groups or organizations must provide a copy of their COVID-19 mitigation protocols and/or a written statement of the protocols they will follow while on the DVA Campus, which are subject to the approval of the DVA Director of Community Outreach and the Commissioner.

3. All volunteers will be subject to screening by DVA Security for signs and risk factors for COVID-19. Any volunteer deemed to be at risk will be denied entry to Campus and will be asked to reschedule.

4. DVA Staff who arrange for the volunteer(s) to arrive on Campus must notify Security in advance.

VII. FOLLOW ALL COVID-19 FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GUIDELINES AND ORDERS

A. CDC AND CT DPH HYGIENIC AND SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES

1. The DVA has instructed all Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff to follow all CDC and CT Public Health hygienic and social distancing guidelines to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes the wearing of masks or PPE as directed. The information is regularly disseminated to Veterans and Staff and is posted around Campus.

2. These procedures are communicated by hardcopy, electronically, and verbally in addition to posting signs across Campus in each building with this information.

3. The DVA has increased cleaning and disinfection across Campus and has established procedures for cleaning and sanitizing to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
B. EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ENFORCEMENT

1. All applicable Executive Orders of the Governor of the State of Connecticut regarding the COVID-19 are incorporated herein by reference and as may be changed from time to time.

2. All DVA Staff, Veteran Residents and Patients are required to comply with any such Executive Orders and failure to do so shall be deemed a violation of DVA rules.

3. Pursuant to DVA Regulations Sections 27-102l(d)-52 and 204, any violation of these protocols by a Veteran Resident or Veteran Patient determined by the Commissioner to constitute an increased health or safety threat or danger or which unreasonably interfere with the implementation of these COVID-19 mitigation measures shall be subject to disciplinary proceedings up to and including involuntary discharge. If the violation constitutes an ongoing danger to health or safety the Commissioner may waive the formal appeal process if supported by a good faith articulation.

VIII. SCREENING AND TESTING OF VETERAN RESIDENTS, PATIENTS AND STAFF

A. All HCC patients and Staff shall be screened daily by a HCP (Healthcare Personnel) for symptoms and risk factors for COVID-19, contacts directly and indirectly with PUIs (persons under investigation), and body temperature check. All HCC Staff shall be screened at the beginning of each shift.

B. All DVA Staff shall be screened daily at the beginning of each shift in accordance with Federal and State guidance and directives, which shall include a full screening with body temperature check.

C. All Residential VVTP participants shall be screened daily at the beginning of each shift in accordance with Federal and State guidance and directives, which shall include a full screening with body temperature check.

D. All Veteran Residents shall be screened by a HCP on a rotating basis for symptoms and risk factors for COVID-19, contacts directly and indirectly with PUIs, and body temperature check.

E. All Veteran Residents are subject to additional screening by Residential Staff or a HCP on a case-by-case basis in accordance with Federal and State guidance and directives, which shall include a full screening with body temperature check.

F. The DVA has issued screening forms to be used during the screening process, which forms continue to be updated and modified based on current guidance and directives.

G. All Veteran Residents and Patients showing signs or risk factors for COVID-19 will be tested in accordance with CDC and State DPH Guidelines and are subject to isolation for up to 14 days.

H. To the extent possible all Veteran Residents, Patients and Staff shall be tested regularly as part of Point Prevalence testing program.
I. The Commissioner has also provided information to DVA Managers of the availability of additional COVID-19 testing for front-line DVA staff. Managers are encouraged to access this process for themselves and staff as appropriate. More information can be found at:
http://www.mutualaidplan.org/Common/Document.aspx?DDID=17211&kly=1&key=t%2byVpXqKuRfrtsFr00Qtj0bl0M%3d

J. The DVA has implemented and updates as necessary internal procedures based on Federal and State guidance and directives to conduct screenings, testing and contact tracing to the greatest extent possible.

K. All staff shall follow CDC and State DPH guidance related to responding to suspected cases and confirmed cases of COVID-19.

IX. APPENDICES TO PROTOCOLS

A. Divisions within the DVA shall develop, as appropriate, written procedures to implement and support the Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols. These procedures shall be issued as appendices to these protocols and are incorporated herein by reference.

B. Any such procedure may be updated separately without issuing an update to these protocols in order to allow flexibility and timely adjustments at the operational level.

X. PROTOCOLS SUBJECT TO ONGOING REVIEW AND UPDATES

A. These COVID-19 mitigation protocols are temporary enhanced protective measures and will remain in effect until rescinded or amended by the DVA Commissioner.

B. These protocols are subject to ongoing review and may be updated consistent with further directives and guidance from Federal, State and healthcare officials and clinical best practices based on developments regarding the COVID-19 virus.

XI. SEVERABILITY

A. If any provision or portion thereof within these protocols is found to be unconstitutional or otherwise not legally supported by statute, regulation or Executive Order and deemed invalid, all remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

Update Issued:

_____________________________      November 27, 2020
Thomas J. Saadi
Commissioner
Appendices to Health and Safety Protocols
to Mitigate Risk of Exposure to COVID-19

Appendix A: Residential Isolation Procedures
Appendix B: Main Dining Room and Meal Procedures
Appendix C: HCC COVID-19 and Infectious Disease Isolation and Recovery Unit
Appendix D: HCC COVID-19 Screening Process for Staff
APPENDIX A

COVID-19 RESIDENTIAL ISOLATION PROCEDURES – UPDATED 12/18/2020

Section 1. INTRODUCTION

These updated procedures are issued to enumerate protocols for isolation of Veteran Residents who are COVID-19 positive, new admissions, those returning from treatment and admission at community-based healthcare facility, returning from out-of-state travel, identified pursuant to contact tracing, or other circumstances deemed to increase risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Section 2. NEW ADMISSIONS

A. All new admissions are required to have a negative COVID-19 test prior to admission and are subject to COVID-19 testing and protective isolation in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit no less than 7 days and up to 14 days. Said new admissions must remain in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit until cleared by the VOC for release consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines including negative COVID-19 testing as indicated herein.

B. New admissions shall be tested for COVID-19 on the first day of their admission or as close thereto and again six days later (i.e. seventh day of residency) or as close to thereafter.

C. New admissions will be released from the Isolation Unit only if both tests conducted by the DVA are negative and the Veteran Resident is asymptomatic for COVID-19. If the Veteran Resident tests positive, then the Veteran Resident must remain in the Isolation Unit until the Veteran Resident is cleared based on negative testing enumerated in Section 4 herein.

Section 3. VETERAN RESIDENTS RETURNING TO CAMPUS FOLLOWING AN ADMISSION TO A COMMUNITY-BASED HEALTHCARE FACILITY OR TRAVEL TO HIGH INFECTION RATE STATE.

A. Veteran Residents returning to Campus following admission to a community-based healthcare facility are required to have a negative COVID-19 test prior to returning to Campus and are subject to COVID-19 testing and protective isolation in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit for no less than 7 days and up to 14 days. This applies to Veteran Residents who were admitted to and remained in a community-based healthcare facility overnight. Said Veteran Residents returning from a healthcare facility admission must remain in the appropriate zone in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit until cleared by the VOC for release consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines including negative COVID-19 testing as indicated herein.

B. Veteran Residents returning from medical care admission shall be tested for COVID-19 on the first day of their return to campus or as close thereto and again six days later (i.e. seventh day of isolation) or as close to thereafter.

C. Said Veteran Residents will be released from the Isolation Unit only if both tests conducted by the DVA are negative and the Veteran Resident is asymptomatic for COVID-19. If the
Veteran Resident tests positive, then the Veteran Resident must remain in the Isolation Unit until the Veteran Resident is cleared based on negative testing enumerated in Section 4 herein.

D. Veteran Residents who have returned from travel to a high-infection state, whether or not said state is included in the CT Travel Advisory List, is subject to COVID-19 testing and protective isolation in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit for no less than 7 days and up to 14 days. Said Veterans shall be tested for COVID-19 on the first day of their return to campus or as close thereto and again six days later (i.e. seventh day of isolation) or as close to thereafter.

E. Said Veteran Residents will be released from the Isolation Unit only if both tests conducted by the DVA are negative and the Veteran Resident is asymptomatic for COVID-19. If the Veteran Resident tests positive, then the Veteran Resident must remain in the Isolation Unit until the Veteran Resident is cleared based on negative testing enumerated in Section 4 herein.

Section 4. VETERAN RESIDENTS WHO ARE COVID-19 POSITIVE OR SHOWING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

A. Veteran Residents who have been identified as COVID-19 positive, presumptively positive, or are showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 shall be placed in the appropriate zone in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit for no less than 7 days and up to 14 days and must remain in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit until cleared by the VOC for release consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines including having two negative COVID-19 tests 48 hours apart prior to release.

B. Veteran Residents who are COVID-19 positive are to be tested on day 12 in the Isolation Unit or as close to thereafter and will be released from the Isolation Unit only if that test is negative and the Veteran Resident has been asymptomatic for COVID-19 for at least 72 hours.

C. Veteran Residents who are showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 will be tested as soon as practicable after being placed in the Isolation Unit. If the Veteran Resident is COVID-19 positive, the resident will be relocated to the COVID-19 positive Red Zone and are then subject to the provisions in Section 4A herein. Veteran Residents who are presumptively positive or are showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 who test negative for COVID-19 will remain in the Isolation Unit and tested on the seventh day of isolation or as close to thereafter. Said Veteran Residents will be released thereafter from the Isolation Unit only if that test is negative and the Veteran Resident has been asymptomatic for COVID-19 for at least 72 hours.

Section 5. VETERAN RESIDENTS IDENTIFIED THROUGH CONTACT TRACING:

A. Veteran Residents identified as exposed to COVID-19 through contact tracing shall be placed in the appropriate zone in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit for no less than 7 days and up to 14 days and must remain in the Residential Facility Isolation Unit until cleared by the VOC for release consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines including negative COVID-19 testing as indicated herein.

B. Contact trace Veteran Residents shall be tested for COVID-19 on the first day of being identified through contact tracing. If the Veteran Resident tests positive, then the Veteran
Resident will be moved to the COVID-19 positive Red Zone and must remain in the Isolation Unit until the Veteran Resident is cleared based on negative testing enumerated in Section 4 herein. If the Veteran Resident tests negative, the Veteran Resident will remain in the non-COVID positive zone and be tested six days later on day seven or as close to thereafter and released from the Isolation Unit if that test is negative and the Veteran Resident has been asymptomatic for COVID-19 for at least 72 hours.

C. Said Veteran Residents will be released from the Isolation Unit only if both tests conducted by the DVA are negative and the Veteran Resident is asymptomatic for COVID-19. If the Veteran Resident tests positive, then the Veteran Resident must remain in the Isolation Unit until the cleared based on negative testing enumerated in Section 4 herein.

Section 6. SELF-ISOLATING VETERANS

A. Veteran Residents who are returning to Campus following one-day/outpatient surgery or non-admission an acute care visit to the Emergency Room (ER) at a community-based healthcare facility and who were not admitted for care to the healthcare facility are subject to COVID-19 testing and protective self-isolation in their own rooms up to 14 days although for a shorter duration in most cases based on CDC and DPH guidelines as these Veterans are at low risk of exposure.

B. Said Veteran Residents must remain in self-isolation in their rooms until cleared by the VOC cleared by the VOC for release consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines including negative COVID-19 testing as indicated herein.

C. Veteran Residents who are self-isolating may access the MDR to obtain their meals only. They are not to stay or eat their meals in the MDR. They must get their meals and immediately return to their rooms with their meals. They may access the lavatory only on their assigned wing but may not otherwise leave their assigned rooms, absent a specific directive from the Director of Residential Programs and Services, until cleared by the VOC and released from self-isolation as indicated herein.

D. Self-isolating Veteran Residents shall be tested for COVID-19 on the first day of their return to campus or as close thereto and again three days later or as close thereafter as possible ensuring there are two tests given 48 hours apart given by the DVA.

E. Said Veteran Residents who are self-isolating will be released from the Isolation Unit only if both tests conducted by the DVA are negative and the Veteran Resident is asymptomatic for COVID-19. If at any time the Veteran Resident tests positive, the Veteran Resident will be relocated to the Isolation Unit and remain there until the Veteran Resident is cleared based on negative testing enumerated in Section 4 herein.

F. The self-isolation provisions in this section shall also apply to Veteran Residents who are not identified as close sustained contact tracers but whom, out of an abundance of caution are designated for monitoring due to low level contact with a COVID-19 positive Veteran.

Update Issued:

Thomas J. Saadi
Commissioner

December 18, 2020
APPENDIX B

COVID-19 MAIN DINING ROOM (MDR) AND MEAL PROCEDURES

Updated: December 8, 2020

A. MDR

1. The Director of Food Services and the Director of Residential Programs and Services have collaborated to set up the Main Dining Room in such a way for Veteran Residents to adhere to social distancing recommendations and minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19.
2. The tables in the MDR have been spaced apart and set up to allow for only one Veteran Resident per table to ensure at least 6 ft. of social distancing.
3. Only one resident is permitted at a time through the meal service line.
4. Floor markings have been placed to identify 6 ft. social distancing.
5. Facilities staff have installed Plexiglas Shields in the food line to afford an extra layer of protection.
6. Meal services are offered in a staggered schedule based on Residential Wings in order to control the flow and number of Veteran Residents in the MDR during meal service.
7. All Grab-and-Go items have been eliminated from MDR self-service program. Items are still available- Veteran Residents are required to ask for single serve items. Appropriate signage has been posted.
8. The MDR will be closed for one hour after each meal service for cleaning and sanitization.
9. The MDR is open for meal and food service only. Residents are allowed to access the MDR for meal and food service only. Residents are to leave the MDR after finishing their meals and shall not hang out, gather, linger, or otherwise remain in the MDR.

B. Meals for Isolation Unit

1. Veteran Outpatient Clinic (VOC) or Residential staff will notify Food & Nutrition staff when a Residential Veteran has been admitted into the Isolation Unit. The following meals are available for residents in the Isolation Unit:
   a. Hot Meal in a Clam Shell To-Go Container
   b. Bagged Cold Lunch
   c. Full Liquid Diet
2. Food service staff will prepare meals according to VOC request.
3. Residential Staff will pick up meals and deliver to VOC prior to doing wellness checks. A meal cart can be used if multiple meals are being delivered. If it becomes necessary to keep all residents out of the MDR, then the meals will be assembled in a meal cart and delivered to residents by Residential staff.
4. Isolation Unit meals are prepared by Food Services staff and delivered on disposable trays and packaging material.

C. Review and Updates

These procedures are subject to continual review and updates per state and federal guidelines and directives and are implemented for the health, safety and welfare of Veteran Residents and Staff.
HCC COVID-19 AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE ISOLATION AND RECOVERY UNIT

Updated: December 8, 2020

1. The Healthcare Center (HCC) has established a COVID-19 and Infectious Disease Isolation and Recovery Unit (“Isolation Unit”) for Veteran Patients under investigation (PUIs) for COVID-19 and confirmed COVID-19 patients. The Isolation Unit is located in the B Upper (Bravo) Unit of the HCC.

2. PUI is defined as a Veteran Patient who is symptomatic following CDC guidelines and direction from the attending physician or medical director and is awaiting laboratory test results. Confirmed positive refers to a Veteran Patient who has been confirmed via test results to be COVID-19 positive.

3. Veteran Patients in the Isolation Unit shall be classified in distinct categories:
   - Orange: symptomatic, awaiting laboratory test results
   - Red: confirmed positive via laboratory test results
   - Green: asymptomatic, returning from acute care
   Each Veteran Patient will be in Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) defined isolation.

4. The orange zone shall be the beds immediately inside the double doors upon entry to the Isolation Unit. The first 5 rooms are single/private rooms.

5. The red zone shall be at the far end of the Isolation Unit; Veteran Patients shall reside as far apart as physically possible on the Isolation Unit and shall remain in their rooms in isolation as indicated by the CDC and State DPH guidelines.

6. Designated staff shall be assigned to the unit and recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) shall be utilized. ALL required care shall be rendered to the patient as outlined in the patient’s interdisciplinary and patient centered plan of care.

7. Meals will be delivered to the Veteran Patients patient in their rooms and cleaning and sterilization methods and products will be utilized with proper PPE as needed.

8. Any Veteran Patient requiring a higher level of care will be discharged to an acute care setting.

9. The duration of each Veteran Patient’s stay in the Isolation Unit shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis following CDC and State DPH guidelines in conjunction with assessment by the attending physician or medical director.

10. These procedures are subject to continual review and updates according to CDC and State DPH guidelines.
1. In compliance with DVA COVID-19 Mitigation Protocols, the Healthcare Center (HCC) has established a screening process and procedures for all staff, including antigen testing.

2. At the beginning of each shift, all staff is required to complete a screening form and take their temperatures.

3. All screening forms must be reviewed by the supervisor on duty.

4. If an employee checks a sign or symptom, this will require a further review. Supervisors on duty are directed to contact DN1 or DN2 if an employee checks a sign or symptom.

5. Employees who check a sign or symptom that would be considered minor and feel they are well enough to work are permitted to work under the following conditions only:
   - Further review and evaluation of employee’s sign or symptom will be conducted. Supervisor on duty is to obtain additional information from the employee regarding the sign or symptom.
   - Employee must be given the antigen test in accordance with the HCC Antigen Testing Protocol.
   - Employees who test positive will be sent home.
   - Employees who test negative may work only after a determination is made that COVID-19 is ruled out and the sign or symptom is attributed to a condition other than COVID-19. The supervisor on duty provides a review of the information and negative antigen test result, and this determination is to be made by DN1 or DN2 after consultation with the Medical Director.
   - This determination will be documented on the employee’s screening form by the supervisor on duty.

6. Employees who have a fever or check other concerning signs or symptoms that are not considered minor will not be permitted to work. They will be sent home, and the supervisor on duty has the authority to send these employees home based on the supervisor’s discretion. Those employees may not return to work until the employees receive negative test results from a PCR test.

7. Employees who call out sick with COVID-19 signs or symptoms must obtain PCR testing and may return only with a negative test result.

8. These procedures are subject to continual review and updates according to CDC and State DPH guidelines.

9. This practice has been in place prior to being enumerated herein and prior to being included in the omnibus protocols as an appendix.