



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
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Commissioner

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

MODIFICATIONS

Updated: July 10, 2020

In response to 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, a broad range of Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols to minimize the risk of exposure of Veterans and Staff to COVID-19. 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. 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 this Modifications omnibus.

As the State of Connecticut moves to a transitional re-opening process, on May 22, 2020, the DVA began updating our COVID-19 mitigation protocols. Modifications or reimplementation of stricter mitigation protocols are based on a review of COVID-19 transmission, infection, hospitalization and fatality rates on Campus and in the Community and in consultation with public health experts. These modifications are aggregated into this document and will continue to be modified and adjusted based on applicable circumstances. The following modifications are effective immediately:

I. VETERAN RESIDENTS' TRAVEL

- A. Effective June 17, 2020 at 9:00 AM, 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.
- B. All Veteran Residents returning to campus from overnight travel must complete the shortened post-travel COVID-19 screening form with Residential Staff. Any resident 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.
- C. Consistent with Executive Orders issued by Governor Lamont and protocols issued by Commissioner Saadi, Veteran Residents must comply with the following while out on pass:
 - 1. No more than two Veteran Residents may travel in a single private vehicle;

2. Facial coverings are encouraged for wear at all times and required for wear in accordance with Governor Lamont's Executive Orders pertaining to reopening Connecticut;
 3. Social distancing of at least six feet between persons, except as otherwise stated herein, to be observed at all times;
 4. Veteran Residents shall comply with Executive Orders regarding the number of people permitted in gatherings indoors and outdoors.
 5. Personal hygiene – frequent handwashing and washing clothing at high temperature settings;
 6. Adhere to all reopening guidelines, Executive Orders, laws, and regulations for visiting any public or private facility while on pass.
- D. Veteran Residents will continue to be educated by the DVA Residential Staff on best practices and following the directives and guidelines from federal and state authorities while on and off Campus. Veteran Residents will continue to be screened for signs and risk factors for COVID-19 and will be tested in accordance with CT DPH and CDC guidelines and at the direction of the Commissioner.
- E. Upon return to campus, all vehicles, bags, containers, etc. . . . are subject to visual inspection by Security pursuant to existing protocols.

II. VENDOR AND FOOD DELIVERIES FOR VETERAN RESIDENTS AND STAFF

- A. Veteran Residents 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. Effective June 26, 2020, 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.
- E. 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.

- F. 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.
- G. DVA Residential Staff is not be 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.
- H. 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.
- I. 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.
- J. 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.

III. VENDOR AND FOOD DELIVERIES FOR HCC VETERAN PATIENTS AND STAFF

- A. Effective July 13, 2020, HCC Veteran Patients and Staff are permitted to order and receive vendor and food deliveries to the HCC 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. 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.
- E. 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.
- F. 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.

- G. HCC Staff is not be 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.
- H. Upon receipt of the delivery, Veteran Patients must return to their rooms for consumption as communal dining is not permitted.
- I. DVA Security will permit the vendors to enter Campus to drive to the designated area outside the front door of the HCC to meet the Veteran Patient or Staff for the delivery. Vendors are not permitted to drive around Campus and are restricted to driving to and from the designated area 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.
- J. 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.
- K. 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.

IV. TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS TO CAMPUS

- A. 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.
- B. Effective June 29, 2020, hours of operation for transportation providers on Campus are not limited.
- C. 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.
- D. Veteran Residents who ordered the transportation service must meet the provider at the Transportation Center in a timely manner.
- E. 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.
- F. 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.
- G. 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.

V. HCC VISITATION FOR VETERAN PATIENTS

- A. Pursuant to order of the Department of Public Health, HCC window visits with Veteran Patients and their family or other responsible party are permitted in accordance with the protocols herein.
- B. Window visits will take place in the Front Lobby Reception area of the HCC or at the Exit Door Area of A-Wing of the HCC consistent with HCC health and safety procedures. The windows will be cleaned on the inside and outside before and after each visit. As two separate locations have been identified to hold the window visits, two simultaneous visits may occur at one time with one visit per location. No more than one visit per location may occur at one time.
- C. Effective June 22, 2020, the HCC will facilitate outdoor visits between Veteran Patients and their family or other responsible party in accordance with HCC health and safety procedures. Outdoor visits will take place outside of the HCC in an outdoor area designated by HCC staff. As outdoor space permits, multiple visits may occur at one time with ample space between the visits.
- D. Only COVID-19 negative Veteran Patients may participate in outdoor visits. Masks are to be worn by all parties at all times and a distance of six feet shall be maintained between the Veteran Patient and visitor(s) at all times during the outdoor visit.
- E. All visits must be scheduled in advance and will take place between the hours of 9:00 AM and 2:30 PM, Monday through Friday. No more than two visitors may participate in a visit at one time. The visit may not exceed twenty minutes.
- F. Veteran Patients are limited to one visit per week. Visits with Veteran Patients may either be one Window Visit, or one Outdoor Visit. Each week they may choose one visit or the other, but may not choose both in one week as they are limited to one visit per week.
- G. 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.
- H. The visitors will be limited to the location of their window visit or outdoor visit as scheduled. The visitors will not be allowed entry into the HCC or to any other location on the DVA Campus except for the purpose of driving to and from the HCC.
- I. All other visitors continue to be restricted from Campus except for end-of-life visits or as otherwise stated in these modifications herein.

VI. MEAL SERVICE IN MAIN DINING ROOM (MDR)

- A. Effective June 5, 2020, meal service in the MDR shall consist of two Residential Wings (or approximate equivalent thereto) per shift with each shift being one hour in duration.

- B. The schedule and assignment of Wings shall be implemented by Residential Services and coordinated with Food Services.
- C. Effective June 29, 2020, 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.

VII. VOLUNTEERS TO CAMPUS

- A. Effective June 8, 2020, individual and organized groups of volunteers, subject to approval by the DVA Office of Community Outreach or by the Commissioner, will be allowed access to the DVA Campus for specified periods of time for particular projects.
- B. 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. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. DVA Staff who arrange for the volunteer(s) to arrive on Campus must notify Security in advance.

VIII. ADMISSIONS TO HCC

- A. Effective June 8, 2020, the HCC will accept regular new admissions. All pre-pandemic regular admissions policies and procedures remain in place and are hereby supplemented with the additional criteria herein.
- B. 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.
- C. 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. New admissions may be subject to additional COVID-19 testing if deemed appropriate by the HCC Medical Director.

IX. ADMISSIONS TO RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

- A. Effective June 22, 2020, the Residential Program will begin accepting new admissions. All pre-pandemic regular admissions policies and procedures remain in place and are hereby supplemented with the additional criteria herein.
- B. All applicants for admission must have a negative COVID-19 test completed 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.
- C. All new admissions are subject to COVID-19 screening and additional testing by the DVA in accordance with CT DPH and CDC guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to, a test administered by the DVA between 48-72 hours after admission and additional testing if recommended by the VOC.
- D. New admissions who did not have a negative COVID-19 test within the 48 hours prior to admission, shall be placed in protective monitoring and shall be tested by the DVA between 48-72 hours after admission, and if that test is negative, the new admission will be retested between 48-72 hours later. Such new admissions are also subject to isolation up to fourteen days and may be released sooner based on negative COVID-19 testing in accordance CT DPH and CDC guidelines and in consultation with the VOC.
- E. All other new admissions may be subject to protective monitoring isolation up to fourteen days if deemed necessary based on CT DPH and CDC guidelines and in consultation with the VOC.
- F. Failure to stay in protective monitoring isolation as directed by DVA Staff is a major violation and shall be grounds for immediate involuntary discharge from the DVA Residential Program. The involuntary discharge will result in the immediate removal of the Veteran Resident from Campus without appeal and notification to State health officials of the Veteran Resident's departure from the DVA Campus.

X. MEETINGS, GROUP EVENTS, INTERVIEWS AND ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS


- A. All meetings, group events, interviews or activities on Campus shall continue to be conducted electronically to the maximum extent possible.
- B. All meetings, group events, or activities that are not conducted electronically must follow all CT DPH and CDC guidelines for masks, social distancing and hygiene and COVID-19 mitigation protocols.
- C. 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. The COVID-19 mitigation protocols to be followed during the meeting, group event or activity must be submitted in advance for approval by the Commissioner.

- D. 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.
- E. Any person entering Campus pursuant to these modifications 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 their interview, meeting, group event or activity on Campus.
- F. DVA Staff DVA Staff notify Security in advance of any visitors arriving to campus pursuant to these protocols. All visitors 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

XI. NO OTHER CHANGES

- A. There are no other changes to the Enhanced Health and Safety Protocols; all other protocols remain in full force and effect.
- B. These modifications are temporary measures and are 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.

Update Issued:


Thomas J. Saadi

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