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

Updated - March 16, 2020

In response to COVID-19, the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has implemented a broad range of enhanced protocols for the health, safety and welfare of our Veteran Patients, Veteran Residents and Staff. The DVA incorporated and updated these existing protocols in an omnibus protocol dated March 12, 2020. These protocols continue to be reevaluated and adjusted consistent with further 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.

In accordance with updated directives and guidelines, the following protocol updates are effective immediately:

I. Healthcare Center (HCC)

A. Travel for HCC Patients

1. All offsite travel for medical/clinical purposes are subject to the standard HCC review process for approval. All non-critical appointments will be rescheduled consistent with medical protocol.

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.

2. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis by the HCC staff for persons visiting patients in an end-of-life health state. Any such visitors are subject to risk screening and shall wear any personal protective equipment as directed by HCC staff in accordance with CDC guidelines.

3. Any allowed visitors who refuse to abide by these measures will be denied entry to the HCC and removed from the DVA Campus.

4. 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 admissions to the HCC are suspended until further notice.

2. Any Veteran Patient returning to the HCC from a community based healthcare facility shall only be re-admitted once medical personnel at the healthcare facility of origin confirm in writing (email acceptable) that the patient is medically cleared and not at risk for COVID-19.

3. Any returning patient is subject to quarantine protocol for 14 days upon re-admission and upon showing no symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19, the patient will be released from quarantine.

II. Residential Programs and Services

A. Travel

1. All off-campus travel by Veteran Residents require a Residential pass subject to the regular process and procedures for obtaining a pass in addition to completing the Enhanced Travel Screening Form.

2. 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.

3. Any Veteran Resident whose requested off-campus travel presents an elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 will not be issued a pass. If a Veteran Resident leaves the DVA Campus without a valid pass, the Veteran Resident will not be permitted to return to the campus absent a valid medical screening establishing that the Veteran Resident does not have COVID-19 and the Veteran shall be subject to quarantine for 14 days.
4. Any Veteran Resident with a valid pass who returns to the DVA Campus and whose travel presents 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 Resident’s departure from the DVA Campus.

B. Recreational Activities and Community Events

1. All group recreational activities on and off campus are suspended until further notice.

2. Travel to community based groups organized by or coordinated with the DVA are suspended. Any off-campus travel that is non-group which is 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.

2. Any Veteran Resident who attends any event off campus 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 and Visitors to Residential Facility

1. All admissions to the DVA Residential Program are suspended until further notice.

2. Any Veteran Resident who is returning to the Residential Facility from a community based healthcare facility shall only be re-admitted once medical personnel at the healthcare facility of origin confirm in writing (email acceptable) that the patient is medically cleared and not at risk for COVID-19.

3. Any returning Veteran Resident is subject to a quarantine protocol for 14 days upon re-admission and upon showing no symptoms or risk factors for COVID-19, the patient 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.

4. All visitors will be 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.
III. **No Visitors to Campus**

A. **Visitors Restricted from Campus**

1. Except as otherwise specifically permitted herein, no visitors shall be permitted at the DVA Campus. Only persons on campus for operational purposes of the DVA or its tenant organizations will be permitted. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis as determined by DVA Senior Staff.

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 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

B. **Vendors and Transportation Providers Are Included in Restriction**

1. No food or other vendor deliveries are permitted to the DVA Campus except for those deliveries by State vendors in support of DVA or tenant operations. No DVA Veteran Resident, Patient or Staff member may order any food or other items to be delivered to the DVA Campus except by common carrier.

2. This restriction prohibits meeting any 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.

4. All Uber vehicles, taxi-cabs or other non-state government transportation providers are prohibited from the Campus. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis by a DVA Departmental Manager (e.g. Director of Residential Programs and Services) for Veterans requiring transportation for employment. In such cases the drivers will be screened by DVA Security for risk of exposure or symptoms of COVID-19.

5. The DVA is not liable for any losses by any person on the DVA Campus who requests a transportation service in violation of this protocol.

IV. **Group Events and Training Sessions on Campus**

The DVA has suspended group events and training activities on Campus by the DVA, State and municipal agencies, and community based entities.
V. **Follow CDC Hygienic 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.

   B. These enhanced hygienic procedures have been communicated by hardcopy, electronically, and verbally in addition to posting signs across campus in each building with this information.

   C. The DVA has increased disinfecting and cleaning across the 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.

Update Issued:

[Signature]

Thomas J. Saadi
Commissioner

Date: March 16, 2020