



COVID-19 Agency Update – December 4, 2020

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Healthcare Center (HCC) has one COVID-19 positive Veteran Patient in the Isolation and Recovery Unit (COVID positive Red zone) and five Veteran Patients are in the non-COVID positive section of the HCC Isolation Unit for protective monitoring all of whom have tested negative for the virus, however as they are new admissions or patients who recently returned from acute care, or have otherwise been preliminarily cleared by clinical staff, they will remain in the Isolation Unit until cleared by clinical staff for release from protective monitoring. Veteran Patients are transferred from the Isolation Unit to their regular rooms after completing protective monitoring including multiple negative COVID-19 tests. One Veteran Patient is in a community-based hospital for non-COVID acute care needs. Among the Veteran Patients in the Isolation Unit are two persons who initially tested COVID-19 positive and within days tested negative twice for the virus and for whom we are awaiting the results of COVID anti-body tests to determine whether these were “false positive” results.

The DVA Residential Facility has seven COVID-19 positive Veteran Residents in its Isolation Recovery Unit Red zone, and one Veteran Resident in Isolation (none COVID positive) under observation and scheduled for testing after presenting to the DVA Veterans Outpatient Clinic with fatigue. The DVA Residential Facility completed seven rounds of COVID-19 testing of all Residential Veterans in July, September, October, November and earlier this week with seven Veteran Residents testing positive for COVID-19 this week. We have increased testing of Veteran Residents from once to twice per month with the next set of testing scheduled for December 15th. The HCC is also conducting weekly testing of all Veteran Patients. This “Point Prevalence Testing” of all Veterans is a key element in our rigorous efforts to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19.

In response to the increase in COVID-19 infection rates in the community and at the DVA Campus, Commissioner Saadi has reinstated Veteran Resident travel restrictions, expanded Isolation protocols, authorized meal service in shifts and is in the process of securing temporary supplemental staff to support DVA COVID-19 operations. The DVA has registered with State and Federal agencies for COVID-19 vaccinations for Veteran Patients, Residents and DVA direct care staff and is awaiting further information regarding vaccine administration procedures and dates.

To date the DVA has tested two hundred and thirty-eight Veteran Residents and Patients (most tested multiple times) for COVID-19 with thirty-six testing positive, about one-third of which were in the past two weeks. Of those testing positive, twenty-five recovered from the virus and eight are currently in the Residential and HCC Isolation Units. One Veteran Resident and two Veteran Patients died in the spring from COVID-19 complications. In addition to ongoing testing of all Veterans, the DVA has conducted COVID testing of all direct care and front-line staff weekly since July and will continue such testing until further notice. A total of twenty-three staff members tested positive for COVID-19 over the past nine months, with twenty-one having recovered and returned to work. Two DVA staff members identified as COVID positive over the past two weeks are in home quarantine and will return to work once cleared consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines. We follow CDC and DPH protocols in response to all positive cases including rapid isolation, conducting contact tracing and follow on testing. The DVA’s comprehensive response to the pandemic includes adherence to our COVID-19 mitigation protocols, regular testing, isolation, contact tracing, wearing masks, and daily screenings in order to keep our Veterans and staff as safe as possible.

DVA COVID-19 Protocols with most recent changes, prior DVA COVID-19 updates and other important information are available at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/DVA-COVID-19-Updates>.