



DVA COVID-19 Update: January 28, 2022

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) activated its Emergency Operations Center this morning in preparation for the impending storm. The Commissioner conducted briefings with DVA leaders and staff and reviewed all storm preparations, staffing and confirmed essential supplies on campus for 72 hours of operations, without resupply, are available. The DVA has made accommodations for staff to remain on the Campus if road conditions are unsafe.

The DVA Healthcare Center (HCC) has four COVID-19 positive Veteran Patients who are recovering in community based healthcare settings and are expected to be clinically cleared to return to the HCC in the next week. There are 12 COVID-19 positive Veteran Patients in the HCC COVID isolation Unit and one Veteran Patient in protective isolation for COVID-19 monitoring purposes after recently returning from a community-based healthcare provider. While the DVA experienced a significant drop in new COVID-19 cases among staff, we maintain regular COVID-19 testing and broad infectious disease control procedures to minimize the risk of COVID to Veteran Patients and staff. All masking, distancing/barriers and heightened hygienic and cleaning procedures remain in place and increased COVID-19 testing will continue until further notice. Pursuant to the Governor's recent Executive Order (14F) no visitors are permitted entry to the HCC unless they are either: (1) fully vaccinated, (2) show proof of a negative COVID test within the previous 48 hours, or (3) submit to rapid COVID testing at the HCC.

The DVA Residential Facility experienced an uptick in COVID-19 positive cases after a sharp decline last week among Veteran Residents with seven Veteran Residents in the COVID-19 positive section of the Isolation Unit and one COVID positive Veteran Resident being treated in a community-based healthcare setting. All the Veteran Residents remain asymptomatic and should be clinically cleared for release from the Isolation Unit early next week. There are nine Veteran Residents in self-isolation in their rooms due to contact tracing awaiting results of a second COVID test next week after an initial negative test this week. Veterans are placed in self-isolation in their rooms if they are identified through contact tracing or have COVID like symptoms but have a negative rapid COVID test result. The DVA continues biweekly testing for all Veteran Residents with the next such testing scheduled for Tuesday February 15th. With the significant drop in COVID cases among DVA Staff, and despite the moderate uptick in cases this week among Veteran Residents, regular on and off Campus recreational and therapeutic activities are being phased back to regular status including shopping trips, movies, community-based events and group activities that present a low risk of COVID-19 exposure.

Since the Pandemic began, the DVA has provided direct care for 270 Veteran Residents and Veteran Patients at our Campus of which 116 tested or retested positive for COVID-19. Of those testing positive, 92 recovered from the virus, 19 are recovering at the DVA and five are in a community-based hospital or a clinical rehab setting. One Veteran Resident and three Veteran Patients passed away in 2020 due to COVID-19, and one Veteran Patient passed away in January 2021 from COVID-19 complications. One Veteran Patient with COVID-19 passed away in December 2020 from a non-COVID-19 medical occurrence.

Of the 126 DVA staff members contracting or re-contracting COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, 125 have recovered and returned to work. One staff member is recovering at home and will return to work consistent with DVA clinical protocols. The DVA vaccine rate for staff is 89% having received a first COVID vaccine dose and 80% being fully vaccinated with 37% receiving a booster vaccine (fluctuations in vaccination rates are due to new staff pending vaccinations). On-Campus Vaccine clinics continue providing COVID-19 and Flu vaccines to staff, Veteran Patients and Residents, with 93% of Veteran Patients vaccinated for the Flu.

The current DVA COVID-19 Mitigation Protocols, previous COVID-19 weekly updates and other information is available at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/DVA-COVID-19-Updates>.