



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
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*Thomas J. Saadi*  
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**DVA COVID-19 & Winter Storm Preparation Midweek Update: December 16, 2020**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Healthcare Center (HCC) experienced a recent surge in COVID-19 cases with seven COVID positive Veteran Patients now in the Isolation and Recovery Unit, five Veteran Patients transferred to a state COVID-19 Receiving Nursing Facility (CRF) due to the HCC COVID positive Isolation Unit section reaching capacity and one Veteran Patient in acute care. There are four Veteran Patients in the non-COVID section of the HCC Isolation Unit for protective monitoring. Veterans in non-COVID Isolation/Quarantine are either new admissions, patients who recently returned from acute care or contact tracers who have tested negative for the virus, and remain in the Isolation Unit until cleared by clinical staff for release to their regular rooms. The HCC continues weekly COVID-19 testing of all Veteran Patients.

The DVA Residential Facility has no COVID-19 positive Veteran Residents in its Isolation Recovery Unit after six Veterans recovered in the past week and were cleared for release by DVA Clinical staff with one COVID-19 positive Veteran in an acute care facility. The DVA continues regular testing of all Residential Veterans which began in July and with a "Point Prevalence Test" of all Veteran Residents conducted yesterday, the results of which will be reported later this week. In December we increased testing of Veteran Residents from once to twice per month with additional testing of Veteran Vocational Therapeutic Program participants. To date the DVA has tested two hundred and thirty-nine Veteran Residents and Patients (most multiple times) for COVID-19 with fifty-three testing positive since March 2020, nearly half of which were in the past month. Of those testing positive, thirty-five recovered from the virus, seven are currently in the HCC COVID-19 Isolation Unit, five Veterans are at COVID-19 Receiving Nursing Facilities, one Veteran Patient and one Veteran Resident are in acute care. One Veteran Resident and two Veteran Patients passed in the spring and one Veteran Patient passed last week from COVID-19 complications.

The DVA continues weekly COVID testing of direct care and front-line staff, which will continue until further notice. We are experiencing delays in receiving test results, an issue I have raised with other State officials who are attempting to address the problem. A total of thirty-six staff members tested positive for COVID-19 over the past nine months, thirteen of whom tested positive in the past nine days. Twenty-two DVA staff members have recovered and returned to work and fourteen are in home isolation until cleared consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines.

DVA preparations for the anticipated surge in Veteran and staff COVID-19 included planning with Office of the Governor, Federal VA and DPH. In accordance with those plans, to address the temporary loss of a number of HCC staff and existing vacancies, on Saturday Commissioner Saadi submitted a State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) request for support which was approved over the weekend by the EOC, Federal VA and FEMA with Federal VA personnel reporting to DVA this past Monday. This support will allow the DVA to maintain regular and COVID-19 emergency operations until staff is cleared to return. We continue efforts to secure temporary contract staff and fill staff vacancies, however the scope of the pandemic and need for clinical staff across the region has slowed this process. The DVA will expand the HCC Isolation Unit COVID positive capacity next week to minimize the transfer of Veterans to CRFs and return those at a CRF to the DVA soon. DVA COVID-19 Protocols with most recent changes, DVA COVID-19 updates and other important information is available at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/DVA-COVID-19-Updates>.

The DVA emergency operations center initiated storm response planning on Monday with equipment inspected, staff coverage confirmed and PPE and other supplies inventoried. The DVA emergency operations center is now in response phase with emergency support function areas in regular communications.