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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
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Thomas J. Saadi
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DVA COVID-19 Update: November 27, 2020

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Healthcare Center (HCC) has two Veteran Patients in our Isolation and Recovery Unit all of whom have tested negative for the virus, however as they are new admissions or patients who recently returned from acute care, they will remain in the Isolation Unit until cleared by clinical staff for release after additional COVID-19 tests and monitoring. Veteran Patients are transferred from the Isolation Unit to their 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 three Veteran Patients recently released from the Isolation Unit is an individual who initially tested COVID-19 positive and then who twice tested negative for the virus and was negative for COVID anti-bodies indicating that the initial result was a “false positive.” As such, the HCC has not had a COVID positive patient since May 5, 2020.

The DVA Residential Facility has two COVID-19 positive Veteran Residents in its Isolation Recovery Unit, and one Veteran Resident in Isolation under observation and scheduled for testing after presenting with symptoms of the virus. Other Veteran Residents who have tested negative for the virus, who had recently returned from an acute care facility or were identified for isolation through expanded contact tracing, were recently released from the Isolation Unit after multiple negative COVID tests and being cleared by clinical staff for release. The DVA Residential Facility completed six rounds of COVID-19 testing of all Residential Veterans in July, September, October and November with all Veteran Residents, except for the previously cited cases, testing negative for COVID-19. Two rounds of testing of all Veteran Residents are scheduled for December 1st and December 15th with such dual testing continuing monthly until further notice. 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.

To date the DVA has tested two hundred and thirty-seven Veteran Residents and Patients (most tested multiple times) for COVID-19 with twenty-seven testing positive, most early in the pandemic. Of those testing positive, twenty-two recovered from the virus and two are currently in the Residential Isolation Unit. One Veteran Resident and two Veteran Patients passed away in the spring from COVID-19 complications.

In addition to ongoing testing of all Veterans, the DVA has conducted COVID-19 testing of all direct care and front-line staff weekly since early July and will continue weekly testing until at least the end of the year. A total of twenty-two staff members tested positive for COVID-19 over the past nine months, with twenty having recovered and returned to work consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines. 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 (one is expected to return to work next week and the other the week after). We follow CDC and DPH protocols in response to all positive cases including conducting contact tracing and Veteran Point Prevalence Testing. The DVA’s comprehensive response to this pandemic and adherence to our COVID-19 mitigation protocols, including regular testing, isolation, contact tracing, wearing masks, and daily screening are working to keep our Veterans and staff as safe as possible.

DVA COVID-19 Protocols and modifications, along with all prior agency COVID-19 updates and other important information are available at: <https://portal.ct.gov/DVA/Pages/DVA-COVID-19-Updates>.