



Veterans Stand Down 2020 & COVID-19 Update: September 28, 2020

This year the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) annual Veterans Stand Down was held over two days with a kickoff ceremony on September 24th at the Rocky Hill Campus attended by local and state dignitaries including Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz. The DVA then hosted a day of online informational presentations by a variety of federal and state agencies and community service providers on topics including housing and homeless services, State labor/employment and vocational resources, Veteran caregiver support, legal assistance, education resources and more. On September 25th there were four Stand Down locations across Connecticut in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwich and Rocky Hill staffed by representatives of federal and state agencies and Veteran and community service organizations providing benefits information and distributing personal need items. There was also free COVID-19 testing and flu shots at each location. Over 400 Veterans registered for the online presentations and regional sites with many walk-ins attending at each location. COVID-19 mitigation protocols were enforced at all locations. The success of Stand Down 2020 demonstrates a new path forward for the DVA in the use of technology, combined with in person services to reach a larger number of Veterans and their family members in the future. My heartfelt thanks to the DVA Team, Service Providers and Volunteers for their dedication in making this new approach to Stand Down a success during these challenging times.

The DVA Healthcare Center (HCC) has no COVID-19 positive Veteran Patients in its Isolation and Recovery Unit and there have been no new Veteran Patients testing positive for COVID-19 in several months. There are two Veteran Patients in the HCC Isolation Unit, all of whom have tested negative for the virus, however as they are new admissions or patients who recently returned from an acute care facility, they will remain in the Isolation Unit until cleared by clinical staff for release after additional COVID-19 tests and monitoring.

The DVA Residential Facility has no COVID-19 positive Veteran Residents in its Isolation Recovery Unit and no new Veteran Residents have tested positive for COVID-19 in several months. The DVA Residential Facility completed two rounds of COVID-19 testing of all Residential Veterans in July and September with all Veterans testing negative for COVID-19. The next one day testing of all Veteran Residents is scheduled for October 14th. This approach, known as "Point Prevalence Testing", is one of the many protocols the DVA has implemented to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19.

To date the DVA has tested over two hundred and thirty-three Veteran Residents and Patients (most tested multiple times) for COVID-19 with twenty-five testing positive, most early in the pandemic. Of the twenty-five Veterans who tested positive, twenty-two recovered from the virus. One Veteran Resident and two Veteran Patients passed away in late April and early May due to COVID-19 complications. A total of six staff members tested positive for COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, most occurring early in the pandemic, with all recovering and returning to work consistent with CDC and DPH guidelines. Every Thursday since July 9th, the DVA has conducted COVID-19 testing of all direct care and front-line staff which continues weekly until further notice. The DVA Veteran and staff testing results to date, along with the DVA's response to any positive tests, demonstrate that our COVID-19 mitigation protocols, including wearing masks, screening and ongoing testing are keeping our Veterans and staff safe.

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