



## **DVA COVID-19 Update: December 19, 2021**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Healthcare Center (HCC) has no Veteran Patients with COVID-19 after the recovery and return of one Veteran Patient who had COVID-19 from the West Haven Federal VA Hospital. The HCC had one staff member test positive for COVID-19 this week, all contact tracing and mitigation protocols were followed minimizing any risk of transmission to other staff and Veteran Patients. As a result of these COVID-19 positive cases and the increase in community based COVID-19 transmission rates the HCC has continued additional COVID-19 testing of Veteran Patients with all other Veterans and staff testing negative for COVID for the past two weeks. All masking, distancing/barriers and heightened hygienic and cleaning procedures remain in place and increased COVID-19 testing will continue until further notice. We continue implementation of DPH's and the Governor's directives for employees regarding mandatory vaccinations and the limited allowed exceptions. Any HCC staff member granted a religious or medical COVID vaccine exemption is required to provide a negative COVID PCR test each week and are subject to additional COVID testing performed at the HCC and must wear elevated levels of PPE particularly when interacting with Veteran Patients.

The DVA Residential Facility has not had a COVID-19 positive Veteran Resident in eight months and unvaccinated Veteran Residents (currently one Veteran) and all Veteran Vocational Therapeutic Program (VVTP) participants tested negative for COVID-19 this week. We continue monthly testing of unvaccinated Veteran Residents and all VVTP participants with the next test scheduled for mid-January. There are no Veteran Residents in the COVID-19 positive section or the protective monitoring section of the Isolation Unit. Regular on and off Campus recreational and therapeutic activities continue for Veteran Residents including shopping, fishing trips, theater trips, bowling, and attending community based civic and Veteran Service Organization events.

Since the Pandemic began, the DVA has provided direct care to two hundred and sixty-five Veteran Residents and Veteran Patients at our Campus of whom seventy-six tested positive or retested positive for COVID-19 since March 2020. Of those testing positive, sixty-nine recovered from the virus. One Veteran Resident and two Veteran Patients passed away in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19, and a Veteran Patient passed away in December 2020 and one 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 eighty-one DVA staff members contracting or re-contracting COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, eighty 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 initiative remains highly effective with approximately eighty-nine percent of staff having received their first COVID vaccine dose and eighty percent being fully vaccinated with twenty-five percent having received a booster vaccine (periodic drops in vaccination rates are due to new staff pending vaccinations). Our on Campus Vaccine clinics continue to offer initial vaccines in addition to administering COVID-19 vaccine boosters to eligible Veteran Patients, Veteran Residents, and staff along as well as Flu vaccines.

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>.