

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



December 21, 2020

Orting and Port Orchard: Over the weekend, additional COVID-19 test results were received at both the Washington Soldiers Home and Washington Veterans Home.

- **Soldiers Home in Orting:** Five additional residents and six additional staff members have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Residents were immediately placed in isolation and three residents were transferred to the VA Puget Sound Health Care System COVID-19 Unit. Two residents are being cared for at the Soldiers Home. The staff members are self-isolating.
- **Veterans Home in Port Orchard:** Two staff members, and one contract staff member have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are now self-isolating.

"Our teams have done an admirable job of keeping COVID-19 at bay for many months," said WDVA Director Lourdes E. Alvarado-Ramos. "With continued spread of the virus in our communities, we are now seeing the impacts on our own Homes and team members. We will remain vigilant in our screening process and regular staff testing as we work to keep COVID-19 from impacting our Residents."

Additional testing will take place this week for both residents and staff members and we will continue consulting with Local Health Departments while also following guidance from the CDC, CMS and our State Department of Health to ensure we are taking every possible precaution. Residents will also be monitored for symptoms every four hours for at least the next fourteen days.

We are asking our staff to pay close attention to whether they have any symptoms, including the presence of a fever. As part of our ongoing screening process, all staff are screened upon arrival at work each day. This process includes a series of questions around whether symptoms are present and a temperature check. In addition, staff are asked to report any symptoms that occur after coming to work.

The Homes, are following guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which requires regular testing of all long-term care facility staff. Currently the rate of positivity in Pierce and Kitsap County requires staff to be tested once each week. This may result in the identification of asymptomatic carriers, but is an important tool in defending against COVID-19.

We are notifying residents, staff and family representatives via email or letter and a post to the website. We have informed employees of their possible exposure in the workplace but we will maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

With news of the COVID-19 vaccine being shipped and administered to health care providers and long-term care facility residents, we also want to provide an update on how the Washington State Veterans Homes are participating in the vaccine process.

The WDVA Veterans Homes Program has registered for the Operation Warp Speed Pharmacy Partnership Program. Through this program, residents and staff will receive one of the vaccine series authorized for administration through Walgreens. Our partners at Walgreens will set up a vaccine clinic in our Homes where both residents and staff, who have signed consents, will be vaccinated.

At this time, we do not have details regarding the dates of immunization or the specific product that will be administered; however, as soon as we have details from our Walgreens representatives, we will share this information.

More information on Operation Warp Speed is available at:

<https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/explaining-operation-warp-speed/index.html>

In an effort to provide information as quickly and accurately as possible, we have developed a website to provide information to families and resident representatives, <https://www.dva.wa.gov/covid>.

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