



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Washington Soldiers Home, 1301 Orting Kapowsin Hwy E • Orting, Washington 98360

Sewing Those Who Served

December 22, 2020

Dear Soldiers Home Residents, Families and Family Representatives:

We continue to test all residents and staff members and unfortunately, over the weekend four additional residents have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Our partners at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System are caring for a total of eight residents in their COVID-19 unit, and we are caring for three residents at the Soldiers Home. The residents are in isolated rooms and staff are wearing appropriate PPE in this area and throughout the entire nursing care facility.

All residents at the Soldiers Home will be retested every 5-7 days until 14 days have passed without a new positive resident. Additional environmental cleaning continues to take place and we will conduct enhanced surveillance, including 4-hour symptom and temperature checks, for residents for the next 14 days.

All staff were tested on December 16 as part of the weekly staff testing and seven additional staff members were diagnosed with COVID-19 as a result of those lab tests.

We are working with the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department to determine next steps with regard to additional measures. We also are following guidance from CDC, CMS and our State Department of Health to ensure we are safeguarding our residents and staff.

Staff will continue to monitor 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 Soldiers Home, is 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 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.

VACCINE INFORMATION:

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 Home 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 with you. What we know right now is that we must obtain a signed consent from either the resident, or the resident's power of attorney. We are beginning to collect consent forms now so that there is no delay once a vaccination date is determined. If you are a resident POA, you will receive a consent form with instructions very soon.

You can find out more about Operation Warp Speed by visiting:

<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>.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Pence', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Pence, Administrator