



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

*Washington Veterans Home • 1141 Beach Drive E • Port Orchard, Washington 98366 • (360) 895-4700*

September 16, 2021

Dear Veterans Home Residents, Family and Representatives,

First, I wanted to take a moment to apologize for a recent email correspondence that was sent out on September 15, 2021 in regards to the transition of current medical team that has been working here tirelessly supporting our veterans for the last several years. This transition is in response to changes in our medical staff due to retirements and changes in careers but were in no way a separation due to standards of care. Our current physician team are our unsung heroes! The previous correspondence was very much a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation while trying to introduce our new team. Our words were not clearly communicated and for that I am offering my sincerest apologies to the awesome team you are because you have always been just that: The A-team!

#### **New CDC Guidance**

This letter contains several updates affecting our Home and how we're caring for and keeping you or your loved one safe.

#### **Mask Requirements:**

Employees in our Veterans Home continue to wear appropriate PPE at all times. **Changes to the DSHS Safe Start for Long Term Care now require all visitors to wear face masks while in the Veterans Home at all times, regardless of vaccination status.** Residents are also required to wear masks when outside of their rooms at all times, including during group activities, regardless of vaccination status. Residents are able to remove masks while eating in the dining rooms.

#### **Visitation:**

Family members, resident representatives, and guests are once again able to schedule indoor and outdoor visits on the Veterans Home campus. We are able to accommodate two visitors during each resident visit. Visitors bringing children under 12 may visit in the outside areas only. All visits must be scheduled in advance by leaving a voicemail at 360-895-4369. You will be notified when your appointment has been scheduled.

#### **Staffing Changes:**

Ingrid Threet has accepted the role of Director of Nursing and started with our New Employee Orientation on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Ingrid has worked as a registered Nurse for 32 years primarily in the psychiatric field and corrections, as well as in infection control. Ingrid's experience includes helping a diverse range of patients including the adolescent and geriatric psychiatric, in both outpatient and inpatient settings.

Additionally, I want to sincerely thank our medical team of Dr. Meyer, Dr. Thomas, Dr. O'Brien and Dr. Compere, for the outstanding contributions they have made to Residents of the Veterans Home over the years, but particularly during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Their forward-thinking, always available, compassionate and resident first mentality has seen us through some incredibly hard times. No doubt, their research and attention to medical trends helped stave off more severe consequences and likely helped to save lives during our COVID-19 outbreak.

Like many nursing homes in our region and even across the country, we are experiencing challenges with our staffing. Our priority remains the care of you or your loved one and we are working proactively to ensure adequate staffing now and in the coming months. In order to mitigate some of these challenges we have taken a number of steps to ensure our veterans and their families are cared for with the dignity and respect they deserve. We at the Washington Veterans Home have used the principles of bed management, which means we have relocated some residents from their permanent room to a vacant room allowing us to consolidate staff members to fewer areas in the Home. These moves have been completed and residents or resident representatives were notified. Once we are able to re-open the vacant units, residents will have the option to move back to their original room.

In order to fill our vacant positions, we are actively recruiting using [careers.wa.gov](https://careers.wa.gov), many social media sites, and virtual recruiting fairs. We are also using contracted agency staff and we have requested assistance with staffing through our state's Emergency Operations Center. Unfortunately, the EOC request did not lead to any staff members being able to assist, so we have asked that our assistance request be referred to FEMA.

In regard to the employee, contractor and volunteer vaccine requirements at both the state and national level, our HR professionals are in the process of verifying all employee vaccine status now. Volunteers and contractors have also received information on how to verify their vaccine status so they can continue serving our Veterans and Families.

The Veterans Homes are offering regular vaccination clinics and we are happy to report that we have seen an increase in the number of staff being vaccinated. If the clinic time or date doesn't work for a staff member, we will work with them to provide a vaccine on the spot, or at another time.

As we're working to gather information on vaccination status, we are also sharing information on important deadlines to get vaccinated and answering as many staff questions and concerns as possible. Thank you for your continued support of our staff members as they work hard to care for you or your loved one. We continue to chart new ground as the COVID-19 Pandemic continues and I am incredibly proud of how our Veterans Home Team, Residents and Families have worked together toward our common goals!

Signed,

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