

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



September 18, 2021

In an effort to maintain transparency, WDVA continues to share information on COVID-19 and its impact on our State Veterans Homes.

Spokane Veterans Home:

It is with sadness that we share the passing of a Spokane Veterans Home Resident, following their COVID-19 diagnosis, either due to COVID-19 or other underlying health conditions. On behalf of the Spokane Veterans Home Team, we offer our sincere condolences to their family and loved ones during this very challenging time.

Walla Walla Veterans Home:

This morning we received confirmation that two of our WWVH residents were diagnosed with COVID-19. We are working closely with the Walla Walla County Department of Community Health and following guidance from them, Centers for Disease Control, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and our State Department of Health to ensure we are continuing to follow the strictest guidance in safeguarding our residents and staff.

We are testing all residents and will continue to screen and monitor for symptoms regularly. Staff are tested twice each week. All staff are screened upon arrival at work each day. This process includes a series of questions around whether symptoms are present, any potential exposures, and a temperature check. In addition, staff are asked to report any symptoms that occur after coming to work. All staff continue to wear PPE in accordance with guidance for nursing home employees.

All State Veterans Homes Updates:

Like many nursing homes in our state and even across the country, our Veterans Homes are experiencing challenges with staffing. Our priority remains the care of Veterans and their Families 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. At all Homes, this means that we have suspended new admissions and we are keeping our census at a lower level.

In order to fill our vacant positions, we are actively recruiting using 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 other state resources.

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.

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.

Vaccine Information

As a part of our continued efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, our home is holding vaccination clinics for all unvaccinated staff, residents, visitors, volunteers and family members who wish to receive the vaccine. We encourage all residents, staff, and community members who are able and eligible to be vaccinated to consider getting vaccinated for COVID-19.

We appreciate the support our State Veterans Homes Residents and Families continue to show for our staff members as they work hard to care for Veterans and their Families. We continue to chart new ground as the COVID-19 Pandemic continues and we are incredibly proud of how our Veterans Home Team, Residents and Families have worked together toward our common goals.

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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