



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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

Serving Those Who Served

September 17, 2021

Dear Veterans Home Resident, Family or Resident Representative:

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

Staffing Challenges:

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. For our Home, 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 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.

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:

Below are several of the safeguards we will take to ensure the safety and security of residents and staff:

- Please contact Suzette Hollowell at 360-893-4564 to schedule your visit.
- All Resident Visits will be scheduled for specific start and stop times to ensure all residents are able to receive a visitor as soon as feasible.
- The number of visits allowed each day will be limited by the total number of visitors allowed in the building at a time to allow for social distancing, as well as the capacity of our staff members to schedule appointments and follow the guidelines established in the Safe Start Plan.
- For regular resident indoor visits, a maximum of two adults and two children will be permitted; however, all visitors (including children) must be able to properly wear all required PPE.
- For indoor visits, either the resident or all of the visitors must be vaccinated. If they are not vaccinated, only outdoor visits are permitted.
- We will offer COVID-19 testing for visitors, as long as we have adequate testing supplies.
- Indoor visits can take place in resident rooms that do not have a roommate. For residents that share a room indoor visits can be conducted in the conference room at the end of wing two.
- Visitors will be screened at the entrance of the facility, provided education and the visitor agreement to sign.
- Outdoor and gazebo visits are also still an option. They do need to be scheduled but there is no limit on how many visitors are allowed and if not using the gazebo there is no time limit for visiting on the grounds.

Dining:

Our dining rooms have re-opened and residents will be able to have their meal service in the dining room.

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!

Sincerely,

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

Robert Pence, Administrator