



**STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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

January 14, 2022

Dear Veterans Home Residents, Family and Representatives,

Our Homes continue to face staffing challenges which unfortunately are worsening due to the Omicron variant and how fast it's spreading. The four Homes have reached Contingency Staffing Levels based on CDC and DOH guidance and the Washington Veteran's Home is now in Crisis Staffing. Steps we have taken to increase our staffing levels include changing some employee shifts, changing staffing patterns, closing units, and increasing our use of agency staff. None of these steps has brought us back up to Conventional Staffing Levels.

To provide more care to residents and reduce the burden on available staff, we will be changing the way that some people can report to work after a positive COVID-19 test, or a high-risk exposure. These changes follow the new CDC, DOH, and our local health jurisdiction guidelines. The changes should reduce how often you are working with lower staff numbers, reduce overtime, and keep us from having to call people in on their days off as often as we have. I want to emphasize that we are not bringing back people exhibiting symptoms such as fever or cough, and we are not asking people who don't feel well to come to work. These changes do follow guidance that the CDC has put out for health care workers.

Under the CDC guidelines for contingency staffing, if an employee tests positive, and they are asymptomatic or have mild symptom resembling a cold, they can return to work 5 days after symptoms first appeared. They must be fever free for 24 hours, without fever reducing medication. (Under the conventional staffing guidelines, we had been waiting 10 days from the date of the test.) Under the current staffing shortage there may be a decrease in the care provided (Example: Bathing may only be weekly, mealtimes may be delayed, call light response times may be delayed).

We want to ensure that both staff and residents are safe while welcoming our staff back as soon as practicable within CDC guidelines. This communication is based on the increased number of Covid-19 cases that we are experiencing with our staff. Our staff continue to tirelessly go above and beyond to ensure proper care is being given to all residents. Unfortunately, with the increase of Covid-19 testing we are seeing an unforeseen increase in positive Covid-19 cases, our staff is at max capacity. We are doing everything within our scope of practice to still ensure the highest quality of care daily.

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