

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



January 8, 2021

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

Today, WDVA mourns the passing of three residents from the Washington Soldiers Home. The loss of our brave heroes is felt throughout our Homes and we offer our condolences to their family and friends. This brings the total to six Soldiers Home residents who have passed either from the effects of COVID-19 or due to other medical conditions that were present prior to the COVID-19 diagnosis.

Facility-wide testing continues at all State Veterans Homes which has resulted in:

- At the Soldiers Home in Orting, five additional residents and one staff member have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- At the Veterans Home in Port Orchard, one additional resident has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- At the Walla Walla Veterans Home, two residents have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- At the Spokane Veterans Home, one additional staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Residents in affected areas of the Homes will be tested and retested 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.

Staff members continue to closely monitor all residents and to isolate COVID-19 positive residents. Staff who are diagnosed with COVID-19 are self-isolating at home. In addition, we are in close contact with the Department of Health Infection Preventionist as well as the Local Health Departments to determine whether there are additional steps that can be taken.

Staff at all State Veterans Homes 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 State Veterans Homes are 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 Kitsap and Pierce Counties requires staff to be tested once each week and the rate of positivity in Spokane and Walla Walla Counties requires staff to be tested twice each week. This may result in the identification of asymptomatic carriers, but is an important tool in defending against COVID-19.

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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