

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



May 6, 2020

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs is providing the updates below on the status of each of our four State Veterans Homes as well as status information on PPE and appreciation to the community for their support during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

All State Veterans Homes

We are proactively testing all of our residents and staff members. We know that many carriers of COVID-19, of all ages, have no symptoms but are able to spread the virus without knowing it. That is why we believe the proactive step of testing all residents and staff, even if they are not experiencing symptoms, is an important tool. Even after this testing is complete, we will continue to re-test any resident with COVID-19 symptoms. Testing information is updated regularly on our website at www.dva.wa.gov/covid.

Spokane Veterans Home

We are saddened to report the passing of the fourth and fifth Spokane Veterans Home Residents, following their diagnosis with COVID-19. The two residents announced in this release were being cared for at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center. We mourn the loss of these brave Veterans and who selflessly served in our Armed Forces, and the spouse of a veteran, and offer our condolences to their family members and friends.

The total number of Spokane Veterans Home Residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 is 45. We will continue re-testing any resident with symptoms and we will conduct regular proactive testing for all residents.

As of May 6, a total of 34 SVH residents have been transferred to the VAMC to receive care in their specialized COVID-19 Unit. Several residents are also being cared for in area hospitals. One resident prefers to receive care in the Spokane Veterans Home. This resident is in a private room in an area that has been isolated from other rooms and will receive care from a dedicated team of staff to minimize the risk of exposure to any other staff or residents.

We will begin welcoming our Spokane Veterans Home Residents back from the Mann-Grandstaff VAMC after they have 2 negative COVID-19 tests within 24 hours. A special COVID-19 Recovery Wing has been established at the Spokane Veterans Home and residents will remain in this quarantine area for 14 days as a precaution, prior to moving back to their own room. We anticipate our first three recovered Veterans will return Home this week.

We have had 23 staff members test positive for COVID-19, several have recovered and have returned to work after meeting all return to work requirements. To each of our WDVA Family, we send you our best wishes for a speedy recovery and return to work.

Walla Walla Veterans Home

Proactive testing of all residents is complete. All resident tests are negative. We will continue re-testing residents if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

All staff were also tested and we did have one staff member who tested positive. This staff member is self-isolated at home and we wish them the very best as they recover.

Washington Soldiers Home, Orting

Proactive testing all 91 residents was completed and on April 24 we learned that a resident tested positive for COVID-19. This resident had no symptoms and all other resident tests were negative. We retested the positive resident twice within 24 hours and both results were negative so we have no active cases of COVID-19 on our campus.

All staff were also tested and we did have one contract staff member test positive. This staff member is self-isolated at home and we wish them the very best as they recover.

Washington Veterans Home, Port Orchard

Proactive testing of all residents is complete. All resident tests are negative. We will continue re-testing residents if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

We are in the process of testing all staff and to date, all results received have been negative. We will continue to share information as new information is received.

A new check-in station was established on the road leading to the Washington Veterans Home with a goal of ensuring that only essential personnel are accessing the campus. Families may use the check-in area as a drop off point for items they're bringing to their resident. Essential personnel, including employees, service providers, and delivery drivers are allowed to continue to the parking area. Our thanks go to several Transitional Housing Program Clients who are working at this check-in area 7 days a week.

PPE Status

Our State Veterans Homes are receiving shipments of personal protective equipment from our local health departments and the State Emergency Operations Center as well as a one-time shipment of PPE coming directly from FEMA. If we have residents or staff who are either experiencing symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, we use additional PPE to prevent the virus from spreading. Making sure we have adequate supplies of these items is essential and our Homes are working closely with our Central Office to order and account for PPE in our facilities.

Community Thank You

We want to thank the many community members and groups who have come forward to make masks, face shields, gowns and other items that can be reused. The generosity of our Veterans' community and community at large is absolutely amazing and we can't thank you enough!

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