

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs News Release



December 17, 2020

Orting: As a result of our resident proactive COVID-19 testing, four additional residents have been diagnosed with COVID-19. These residents are currently asymptomatic and were immediately placed in isolation in one area of the building. Staff are wearing appropriate PPE and using all appropriate precautions. All other resident tests have returned negative.

We are working closely with our partners at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System and this afternoon, we transferred all five COVID-19 positive residents to their care.

“We are grateful to our partners at the VAPSHCS and will stay in close contact to monitor our residents and eventually be able to welcome them home,” said Soldiers Home Administrator Robert Pence.

All residents at the Soldiers Home will be retested every 5-7 days 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.

All staff were tested on December 16 as part of the weekly staff testing and we are awaiting results from those lab tests.

We are working with the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department to determine next steps with regard to additional measures. We also are following guidance from CDC, CMS and our State Department of Health to ensure we are safeguarding our residents and staff.

We are asking our staff to pay close attention to 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 Soldiers Home, is 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 Pierce County requires staff to be tested once each week. This may result in the identification of asymptomatic carriers, but is an important tool in defending against COVID-19.

We are notifying residents, staff and family representatives via email or letter and a post to the website. We have informed employees of their possible exposure in the

workplace but we will maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

With news of the COVID-19 vaccine being shipped and administered to health care providers and long-term care facility residents, we also want to provide an update on how the Washington State Veterans Homes are participating in the vaccine process.

The WDVA Veterans Homes Program has registered for the Operation Warp Speed Pharmacy Partnership Program. Through this program, residents and staff will receive one of the vaccine series authorized for administration through Walgreens. Our partners at Walgreens will set up a vaccine clinic in our Homes where both residents and staff, who have signed consents, will be vaccinated.

At this time, we do not have details regarding the dates of immunization or the specific product that will be administered; however, as soon as we have details from our Walgreens representatives, we will share this information.

More information on Operation Warp Speed is available at:
<https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/explaining-operation-warp-speed/index.html>

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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