



Department of Health

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May 14, 2021

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update and Visitation Update

Dear Resident / Representative:

This letter is to provide an update on the status of the Veterans Home's efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). The safety and wellbeing of all residents is our top priority. The Infection Prevention and Control Committee continues to meet as necessary to review and act on guidance from the federal and state governments and work closely with health department contacts.

Currently, there are no COVID-19 positive residents in the facility. A total of ninety residents have tested positive since testing started. Resident molecular (PCR) laboratory testing continues and combined with rapid antigen testing we conduct at least two times weekly testing and more for targeted testing. Residents with symptoms will continue to be tested for the coronavirus.

We continue to test staff at least twice weekly in order to identify any new cases as soon as possible. One hundred forty-three staff have tested positive since testing became readily available.

In addition, in our ongoing fight against the Coronavirus, the vaccination program remains a priority for the Home. We are pleased to let you know that all residents have been vaccinated, and we continue our efforts to increase the vaccination rate amongst staff. This is in concert with the DOH and CDC's push to get as many people vaccinated as possible, and we are making daily progress.

The Veterans Home has been working on a visitor re-boot plan with collaboration from a dedicated group of staff. We want as many families as possible to visit and encourage all types of visitation. All visits will be conducted following CDC and State guidance. Please review the updated Visitor Fact Sheet and be aware that you will be expected to only go to and from the area that has been designated for your visit. Strict infection control practices must continue to be maintained during visits.

Visits must be scheduled in advance by contacting your Social Worker. Staff will manage visitation periods, 30 minutes per visit, to allow as many residents as possible an opportunity to see their loved ones. These time frames are expected to change as the weather improves.

Visitors are to check in at the Security desk and be screened (consisting of a temperature check and questions about symptoms, exposure, and recent travel). Two (2) visitors are allowed per resident visit, to allow for appropriate social distancing. Visitors are required to wear a face covering at all times while on the premises AND adhere to hand sanitizing and social distancing requirements of at least 6 feet apart.

Families are encouraged to communicate with your loved one via virtual methods such as FaceTime. Please call ahead and speak with the Social Work staff at (585) 345-2091. All visits must be confirmed by the staff prior to visitation. We thank you for your patience and understanding as we begin to more fully open for visitors.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Nicole M. Gallagher

Nicole M. Gallagher, LNHA
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New York State Veterans Home at Batavia

COVID-19 VISITOR FACT SHEET

The Veterans Home's mission and goal are always to keep residents, their loved ones, and the staff safe from infectious diseases, particularly COVID-19. It is important that guidelines are followed to ensure that the COVID-19 virus does not spread. Visitors, who are unable to adhere to the Home's requirements, will not be permitted to visit or will be asked to leave. At any time that the Home determines there would be a concern for you or your loved one's safety, the Home has the right to immediately intervene and stop the visit.

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness. People who are infected but do not show symptoms can spread the virus to others. It is possible that the virus may spread through the droplets and airborne particles that are formed when a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, talks, or breathes. Droplets can also land on surfaces and objects and be transferred by touch. A person may get COVID-19 by touching the surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The most common signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. **Please do not visit if you have any of these symptoms.**

This list does not include all possible symptoms, so please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or the New York State Department of Health (DOH) websites for the latest information:

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

DOH: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>

Visits

All in-person visits (outdoor and compassionate) must be set up with the Social Work Department. The Home will limit the number of total visitors in the Home at any given time based on the ability to safely monitor visits, so be prepared to come in at another time or leave if requested to give others the opportunity to have a visit.

Virtual visits (video chat / Skype, Google duo, Zoom, etc.) visits must be arranged through the Social Work Department. 72-hours' notice of a request is required.

Contact information for scheduling visits is as follows:

- Outside / Compassionate / Comfort Care / End of Life Visits:
Your Loved Ones Designated Social Worker
- Virtual / Video Assisted Visits (Skype, Google duo, Zoom, WhatsApp) etc.:
Your Loved Ones Designated Social Worker

If there is a change in the schedule, including for impending inclement weather, we will attempt to contact visitors prior to the visit whenever possible.

Indoor Visitation

Indoor visitation will be allowed only when the facility has met the CDC and DOH regulation for indoor visitation. (exception – compassionate/comfort care and end-of-life visits). These scenarios include limiting indoor visitation for:

- Unvaccinated residents if the COVID-19 county positivity rate is >10% AND <70% of residents in the Home are fully vaccinated,
- Residents with confirmed COVID-19 infection, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met the criteria to discontinue Transmission-Based Precautions, OR
- Residents in quarantine, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, until they have met the criteria for release from quarantine.

Residents on Quarantine

Residents who are on transmission-based quarantine precautions for COVID-19 shall only receive visits that are virtual, or in-person for compassionate/comfort care and end-of-life situations, with adherence to transmission-based precautions. This restriction shall be lifted once transmission-based precautions are no longer required per CDC guidelines and other visits may be conducted as described in the Home's plan. Every effort will be made to accommodate alternative virtual visitations for residents who are ineligible to receive a visitor.

Indoor Visitation During an Outbreak

An outbreak exists when there is a new nursing home onset of COVID-19 (such as a new COVID-19 case among residents or staff). With the appropriate safeguards, visitation can still occur when there is an outbreak if the transmission of COVID-19 is contained to a single unit of the Home. When a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff is identified, the Home will immediately begin outbreak testing and suspend all visitation (except for compassionate /comfort care and end-of-life visits), until at least one round of facility-wide testing is completed. If additional criteria are met, visitation may resume for non-affected units.

If subsequent rounds of outbreak testing identify one or more additional COVID-19 cases in other units, then visitation will be suspended for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until the Home meets the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

Outside Visitation Recommended

Visitation shall be offered in outdoor areas, weather permitting. We strongly encourage having visits outside as recommended by NYSDOH. Outdoor visitation will take place under the overhang in outside of the Liberty Lounge.

Visit Priority

Visitation priority will be given to residents who have not had visitors and residents at end-of-life or critical compassionate care needs to ensure all residents have ample opportunity to visit with their loved ones.

Visitors include, but not limited to, family members, loved ones identified and approved by the resident and/or health care proxy, representatives from the long-term care ombudsman program (LTCOP), and resident advocacy organizations.

Other Resources

The Home will provide headphones and microphones, iPads, and/or computer tablets for use by residents to enable communication and to also allow for an adequate degree of privacy. These devices will be cleaned and disinfected between uses by assigned staff.

Testing

Visitor COVID-19 testing is strongly encouraged but not required.

Screening

- Visitor(s) will arrive at the Home and will be screened and (as requested) by a designated staff member before they will be allowed to visit with the resident.
- Screening consists of a temperature check and asking screening questions to assess signs and symptoms of and potential exposure to COVID-19 and questions regarding travel to other areas.
- Visitors screened prior to resident access and visitation will be refused if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms, or do not pass the screening questions.
- If any visitor fails any part of the screening process (both temperature and questions), the facilitator shall notify the Infection Preventionist Nurse or designated nurse supervisor, who will advise the visitor against visiting and ask that they re-schedule their visit when they have resolved the reason for the failed screening. The assigned Social Work staff will also be notified who will let the resident know as well.
- Visitors will be required to provide demographic information about themselves such as full name, street address email address and telephone number. This is to assist with contact tracing in the event COVID-19 is identified following the visit.
- Once the visitor is cleared, staff will ensure the visitor(s) have an appropriate face covering on and sanitize their hands prior to being directed to the designated visitation area. Staff will direct the visitor(s) to the assigned area.
- Please speak with the person facilitating the visit if you have any questions.

Visitor Guidelines

- Visitor movement will be limited while in the Home, including limiting visitors from walking around different halls of the Home. Visitors will be escorted directly to the designated visitation area. Visitors must remain in the designated area during the visit and leave at the end of the visit. Visitors are not allowed to deviate from their assigned visit location.
- Two visitors will be allowed to visit at any one time. More than two visitors at a time will be considered on a case-by-case basis and those visitations will be scheduled to allow for appropriate social distancing.
- Children under the age of 16 are welcome if they can wear and tolerate a mask at all times while at the Home during the entire length of the visit. They must be accompanied by an adult 18 years old and older and comply with all other recommendations.

- Visits shall be limited to 30 minutes to meet the needs of as many residents and families as possible.
- Food and beverages should not be consumed or shared during a visit and will be discouraged due to the need to remove a face mask to consume it.
- If the resident is fully vaccinated, they can choose to have close contact (including touch) with their visitor while wearing a well-fitting face mask and performing hand-hygiene before and after. Regardless, visitors should physically distance from other residents and staff.
- Pets are not permitted.
- Staff shall assist with visits as necessary.
- Adequate Personal Protective Equipment will be available for both visitors and residents. Any staff member can assist.
 - Visitor(s) must wear a face mask or face covering at all times while on the Home's property and during a visit.
 - Residents will be required to wear a face mask or face covering during the visit, as medically tolerated.
 - The Home may recommend that visitor(s) also wear eye protection / face shields as warranted. In these cases, the Home will provide a face shield as needed.
 - If a visitor is going into an area that has transmission-based precautions in place, they will be offered appropriate PPE to wear. If they refuse to be appropriately dressed for the visit they will not be allowed to visit.
- Both residents and visitors will be expected to use 60% alcohol-based products for hand sanitizing. This is available at the main entrance and throughout the Home. Please speak with any staff member if you are unable to locate hand sanitizer.
- Noncompliance with any item on this fact sheet designated to keep the resident, their loved ones, and staff safe will result in termination of the visit.