



Department of Health

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July 16, 2021

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Resident / Representative:

This letter is to provide you with an update on the status of the Veterans Home's efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The safety and wellbeing of all residents is our top priority. The Infection Prevention and Control Committee continues to meet at least weekly to review new federal and state guidance and work closely with the county, regional, and state health department contacts.

A total of forty-seven residents have tested positive since testing started. Sixty-seven staff have tested positive or presumptive positive since testing became readily available.

All unvaccinated staff will be tested once a month now. Screening of all staff and visitors will continue with rapid testing for any staff reporting symptoms prior to working. Resident testing will be targeted based on symptoms and if there is a positive case in the Home of a resident or a staff person.

We are including an updated "Visitor Fact Sheet" that will hopefully help describe the newest guidance and provide information for visitors. This will also be given out to visitors when they arrive at the Home.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Social Worker.

Stay well,

Kurt D. Apthorpe

Kurt D. Apthorpe, MBA, LNHA, CNHA
Administrator

NYS Veterans' Home

4207 State Highway 220 | Oxford, NY 13830

New York State Veterans' Home at Oxford

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. It is important that guidelines are followed to ensure 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 must be set up by the Social Work Department and at least 24-hour advanced notice of a request to visit is required for Monday thru Friday visits. Visits on the weekends (Saturday and Sunday) must be arranged by 2:00pm Friday. Exceptions may be granted for end-of-life visits.

The Home may limit the number of total visitors in the Home at any given time based on the ability to safely monitor everyone, so be prepared to come in at another time or leave if requested to give others the opportunity to have a visit.

Window and virtual (video chat / Zoom) visits must be arranged through the Recreation Therapy Department. At least 24-hours' advance notice also required for Monday thru Friday video chats. Weekend visits (Saturday and Sunday) must be arranged by 2:00pm Friday.

Contact information for scheduling visits is as follows:

- On-Site Visits: The Social Work Department ...**(607) 843 - 3123**

- Window and Virtual / Video Assisted Visits:
The Recreation Department ...**(607) 843 - 3177**

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

Indoor Visitation

Indoor visitation will be allowed at all times (as can be safely managed by the Home) and for all residents (regardless of vaccination status), except for a few circumstances when visitation should be limited due to a high risk of COVID-19 transmission (exception - compassionate care visits will be permitted at all times). These scenarios include limiting indoor visitation for:

- 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, through windows, or in-person for compassionate care 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 visitations such as using video chatting (FaceTime) or window visits 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). 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 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 neighborhoods.

Visitation can still occur when there is an outbreak but only if specific procedures are followed. If there is a positive resident or staff case, the Home will notify residents and their representatives to explain the updated process.

If subsequent rounds of outbreak testing identify one or more additional COVID-19 cases in other neighborhoods, then visitation may be suspended for all residents (vaccinated and unvaccinated), until the Home meets the criteria to discontinue this suspension. Compassionate care visits may continue regardless of outbreak status.

Outside Visitation

Visitation shall be offered in outdoor areas, weather permitting, and under certain circumstances it will occur in the Auditorium, which is a well-ventilated space.

We strongly encourage having visits outside. The designated locations for outside visits are on the front patio, the area between the Oak Neighborhood and the Administration hallway (near the Gazebo location), the Gazebo, and under the awning area by the front entrance. These areas will be assigned by the Social Work Department.

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 and visitors 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. The Home will provide rapid antigen testing upon written consent for the test. Visitors with a positive test result from a PCR or rapid antigen test will not be allowed to visit.

Screening

- Visitor(s) will arrive at the Home and will be screened and tested by a designated staff member before they will be allowed to visit with the resident. We strongly recommend that unvaccinated visitors get tested.
- 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 tested and screened prior to resident access and visitation will be refused if they have a positive test, 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), Security will notify the Infection Preventionist Nurse or designated nurse supervisor, who will advise the visitor that they must leave and may 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 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, Security will ensure the visitor(s) have an appropriate face covering on and sanitize their hands prior to being directed to the designated visitation area. Security will direct the visitor(s) to the assigned area or resident room.
- Please speak with Security 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 must go directly to the resident's room or 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 in a resident room 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 in the auditorium or other designated location to allow for appropriate social distancing.
- Visitors under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older. Babies and toddlers must remain with the adult and will not be counted as a separate visitor.
- 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.
- Pets are allowed but must be screened by Security and provide updated veterinary records.
- 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. If the resident and visitor are vaccinated, then masks do not need to be worn during this visit. Regardless, visitors should remain physically distance from other residents and staff.
- A face mask must be worn when walking throughout the Home.
- A face mask must also be worn while seating outside the Home.
- After the visit is over and the visitor is leaving, a mask must be worn.
- Adequate Personal Protective Equipment, such as face masks, will be available at the front entrance and the visiting areas for both visitors and residents. Any staff member can aid.
- 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.