



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

MARY T. BASSETT, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

KRISTIN M. PROUD
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

December 3, 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 respond to our current situation, review new guidance, and work closely with our health department contacts.

We had three new positive staff cases this past week. This is a total of eighty-four residents and ninety-nine staff who have tested positive or presumptive positive since testing became readily available. All positive residents remain in the COVID cohort on isolation in the Oak Neighborhood. We continue to conduct additional resident and staff testing and will alert you of any positive results.

In reviewing our current outbreak status, we still have active COVID cases and the community transmission rate is still well over 10% (high). We are required to maintain our quarantine status through December 14th. All residents are currently on transmission-based precautions (TBP) or quarantine but can still receive visitors. Due to the current outbreak, visitors should be aware that there still exists the potential risk of being exposed to the virus during a visit.

We have updated our guidance for visitors and we will provide this to visitors upon arrival at the Home. Our goal is to meet or exceed the Core Principles of COVID -19 Infection Prevention as described in the guidance letter. Please make sure to review it with visitors.

As always, please contact your Social Worker if you have any questions or for further assistance.

Respectfully,

Kurt D. Apthorpe

Kurt D. Apthorpe, MBA, LNHA, CNHA

Administrator

NYS Veterans' Home

4207 State Highway 220 | Oxford, NY 13830



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Dear Visitor,

CMS and the Department of Health have lifted visitation restrictions for nursing homes. We expect everyone, visitors, residents and staff, to follow the Core Principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention, especially in light of the Chenango County transmission level and the active COVID cases in the Home.

As part of our efforts to keep everyone safe, we must continue to work together to follow the Core Principles of COVID-19 Infection Prevention. These include:

1. Anyone who has a current positive COVID-19 test, symptoms of COVID-19, or meets the current criteria for quarantine will not be allowed to visit. We will continue to screen all visitors prior to entering.
2. Everyone must wear a face mask at all times while at the Home (covering mouth and nose). Face masks will be provided by the Home, as needed.
3. Other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may also be required to be worn by visitors, such as a face shield. These will be provided by Security, as needed.
4. Visitors must adhere to the signage throughout the Home which will include information about COVID-19 signs and symptoms, infection control precautions, and guidance on the use of face masks and other infection control related information.
5. High touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
6. Staff will continue to use PPE as per guidelines.
7. Effective cohorting of residents (e.g., separate areas dedicated to COVID-19 care).
8. Resident and staff testing in accordance with guidelines.
9. Physical distancing of at least six feet between people.
10. All visitors are to walk directly to the resident's room or designated visitation area and remain in that location until departure. Upon departure, please walk directly to the lobby exit.
11. Visitors will be asked to maintain proper hand hygiene (use of alcohol-based hand rub).
12. Resident and staff testing in accordance with guidelines.

In addition, residents currently on transmission-based precautions (TBP) or quarantine can still receive visitors. Due to the risk of transmission, visitors must follow the signs on the resident room doors, and:

1. Be aware that there exists the potential risk of being exposed to the virus during the visit;
2. The resident should wear a well-fitting facemask (if tolerated), and
3. The Home may require use of other appropriate PPE, if available, for the visit.

Visitation Process

1. When you come into the Home to visit, check in at the Security Desk and go directly to the resident's room or the designated visitation area. Do not walk around the hallways or different common areas of the Home.
2. If a resident and all their visitors are fully vaccinated and the resident is not moderately or severely immunocompromised, you may choose not to wear a face covering or mask and to have physical contact.

3. Visitors should always wear face coverings or masks when around other residents or health care personnel, regardless of vaccination status.

Visitation During an Outbreak Investigation

An outbreak investigation begins when a new nursing home onset of COVID-19 occurs – meaning a new case of COVID-19 among residents or staff. Visitors will be informed via the Home’s website and/or posted signs. While it is safer not to enter the Home during an outbreak investigation, you are permitted to visit and must adhere to the core principles of infection prevention. If you choose to visit during an outbreak investigation period, you will be required to wear a face mask (and face shield, if required) during visits, regardless of vaccination status and visits will take place in the resident’s room as per guidelines.

Outdoor Visitation

Outdoor visitation will be available for those individuals preferring to be outside.

Vaccination Status

- If you are unvaccinated, we strongly recommend that you reconsider getting vaccinated. The data shows that vaccinated people are protected from severe illness and death from COVID-19. Unvaccinated persons are at the greatest risk of severe illness, hospitalization, and death. In fact, most hospitalizations and death from COVID-19 are happening among those who are unvaccinated.
- Security staff may ask your vaccination status, as permitted by guidelines. If you chose not to disclose your vaccination status, you will be required to wear a face mask at all times during your visit.

Testing

You may also be tested as a condition of visitation. This requirement will be determined by the Home’s Infection Prevention and Control Committee based on the current outbreak status in the Home, and the community transmission rate for Chenango County and the surrounding counties.

Risks

There are still risks associated with visitation and COVID-19. However, these risks are reduced by adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention. If a visitor, resident, or their representative is aware of the risks associated with visitation, and the visit occurs in a manner that does not place other residents at risk (e.g., in the resident’s room), the resident will be allowed to receive visitors as he/she chooses.

Residents may deny or withdraw consent for a visit at any time.

Thank you for working together with us for the safety of your loved ones and everyone here at the New York State Veterans Home at Oxford.

Sincerely,

Kurt D. Apthorpe

Kurt D. Apthorpe, MBA, LENA, CNHA
Administrator

NYS Veterans’ Home

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