



## Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL  
Governor

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

KRISTIN M. PROUD  
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

January 21, 2022

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Resident / Representative:

The Veterans Home's efforts to prevent the spread and impact of the coronavirus continue. The safety and wellbeing of all residents is our top priority. The Infection Prevention and Control Committee continues to meet regularly to respond to our current situation, review new guidance, and work closely with our health department contacts.

We had seven new positive staff cases and one new resident cases this past week. This is a total of eighty-seven residents and one hundred and forty-three staff who have tested positive or presumptive positive since testing became readily available.

The resident, who tested positive, lives on Oak and will be moved to the Oak Cohort Area. We are continuing to ask residents to try not to leave their room as much as possible. Residents should wear a mask at all times when out of their rooms or when closer than 6 feet from others.

We will continue testing residents and staff at least three times next week and will alert you of any positive results.

Visitors will continue to need to provide proof of a negative test prior to visiting and are able to get tested at the Veterans Home. We have extended hours for the visitor testing clinic. The schedule for this weekend's testing clinic is as follows:

Saturday: 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM  
Sunday: 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
Monday: 5:00 AM – 5:00 PM

If the clinic is not open, visitors are able to complete a self-test at the Veterans Home, or provide proof of a negative rapid antigen (at home) test done within 24 hours of a visit or proof of a negative PCR test done within 48 hours of a visit. The attached Visitation Notice has been updated to explain the testing requirements in more detail.

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

Respectfully,

*Kurt D. Apthorpe*

Kurt D. Apthorpe, MBA, LENHA, 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. Visitors will be asked to maintain proper hand hygiene (use of alcohol-based hand rub).

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 face mask (if tolerated),
3. The Home may require use of other appropriate PPE, if available, for the visit, and

4. Resident and visitors must wear all required PPE when staff are in the resident's room.

### **Visitation Process**

1. When you come into the Home to visit, check in at the Security Desk and, either self-test, provide proof of outside test results, or test at our testing clinic, then 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 the resident (or representative) and the visitor are aware of the risks and adhere to the core principles of infection prevention:
  - a. If a resident and visitors are fully vaccinated and the resident is not moderately or severely immunocompromised ), you may choose not to wear a face mask and to have physical contact while in the resident's room.
  - b. Visitors may eat with a resident (in the resident's room).
3. Visitors are required to always wear face masks when around other residents and health care personnel, regardless of vaccination status.
4. Upon ending a visit, please walk directly to the lobby exit.

### **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**

Weather permitting, outdoor visitation will be available for individuals preferring to be outside.

### **Vaccination and Booster Status**

If you are unvaccinated or haven't received a booster, we strongly recommend that you reconsider this. Data shows that vaccinations and boosters protect people 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.

## **Testing**

All visitors must now have a negative COVID-19 test in addition to passing the standard screening questions. You may choose one of the following 3 options:

1. Self-test here at the Veterans Home in the lobby.
    - You will have to sign a self-attestation form confirming your results.
  2. Bring proof of a negative test from your home or from another site.
    - You will have to sign a self-attestation form confirming that you have done a test outside the Home (that resulted in a negative)
    - We must verify that you received a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result either
      - one day prior to visitation using an antigen (Rapid) test or
      - two days prior to visitation using a NAAT (e.g. PCR) test.
- or
3. Test in our testing clinic, located in the auditorium, during the scheduled clinic times.

Once you are signed in at Security, if you do not have proof of a negative test result outside the Home, and the testing clinic is not open, then the Security Department will issue you a rapid swab kit that you must complete in the lobby in one of the designated areas.

## **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*

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