



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Receives Nursing Assistance from USDVA and WI National Guard

UNION GROVE – Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Mary Kolar announced today that 20 nurses have been assigned to the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in response to the recent outbreak of COVID-19 there. In addition, the Wisconsin National Guard will take over coronavirus testing on site. Tests had previously been conducted by the Veterans Home staff. Guard assistance will free up staff for patient care.

“Our strong infection control procedures and protocols kept our residents free of the coronavirus for five months,” Secretary Kolar said. “Now, we are refocusing all efforts on preventing its spread. Thank you to the USDVA and the Wisconsin National Guard for their swift response to our request for help.”

The first two cases of coronavirus were reported on August 4, 2020, at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove. As cases continued to rise among residents and staff, the WDVA requested assistance. The first USDVA staff arrived on campus on Sunday. A total of 20 USDVA nurses are now assisting at the facility.

All 153 residents at the Home have been tested for COVID-19 since August 4, 2020. Currently, 20 have tested positive for coronavirus. All residents who have tested positive reside in the same residence hall. Some residents who had been already receiving hospice and palliative care for significant underlying medical conditions unrelated to coronavirus have now also tested positive. Three such residents passed away over the past three days from medical conditions are likely unrelated to COVID-19. A medical examiner determines cause of death.

“Please, for those who have served our country and those who support them, stay home whenever you can, wear a mask when you are out, stay at least six feet away from other people, and wash your hands regularly,” Kolar said. “Protect our state Veterans Homes staff and our veterans.”

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, since March, the WDVA has restricted visitors except in end-of-life situations, screened every single person who entered our facilities for COVID-19 symptoms (including a temperature check), screened residents daily for COVID-19 symptoms, canceled all large group activities and communal dining and focused on smaller unit or individual activities, worked to ensure residents and staff practice social distancing and proper masking, and strongly emphasized routine environmental cleaning.

The following steps are being taken on campus, due to the residents’ positive test results:

- The residents are quarantined in their private rooms.

- A very limited number of staff will work with the residents. These staff have been trained in infectious disease control and will be wearing the appropriate PPE including N95 masks and face shields.
- Care will be coordinated with the residents' primary care physicians.
- Security has been posted on the property so only staff and other authorized individuals may enter campus.

More than 61,000 people have tested positive for coronavirus in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services is currently reporting High COVID-19 Activity in Racine, Kenosha, Milwaukee, and other counties that surround the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove.

Regular updates/notifications regarding COVID-19 at the Wisconsin Veterans Homes are posted at www.WisVetsHomesCOVID.com.