



Veterans Home - Chippewa Falls

Family Updates 3.9.2021

Dear Family and Friends,

I can't thank you enough for your support and cooperation throughout this pandemic. It has meant so much to our team who continues to do everything possible to keep our veteran community safe. This is an update on our current COVID-19 status.

COVID-19 Updates

At the Veterans Home, we have had no new confirmed COVID-19 cases among members or staff in over five weeks.

Here is our current and cumulative information:

Current Active COVID-19 Confirmed Positive:	0
Current Active COVID-19 Suspected Positive:	0
Cumulative COVID-19 Confirmed Positive:	63 (twenty-four members, thirty-six employees, three contracted individuals)
Cumulative COVID-19 Suspected Positive:	2 (one member, one employee)
Total Recovered:	61 (twenty-one members, thirty-seven employees, three contracted individuals)

We're doing everything possible to protect those who live and work in the Veterans Home with our COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan, which follows all guidance from local, state, and federal health officials. It includes:

- Utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment;
- Screening and monitoring of members, staff, and visitors for symptoms;
- Testing members and staff based on federal and state guidance;
- Taking environmental safety precautions, such as disinfecting high-touch surfaces;
- Adhering to safe visitation procedures; and
- Assuring safe activities and dining experiences.

See below for the full plan.

Vaccine Clinic:

We continue to get ready for our COVID vaccine clinic this Friday, March 12th. This is for any member who has not gotten his/her vaccine yet.

CDC Guidance:

As you've heard, the CDC came out with guidance this week regarding vaccinated individuals being able to gather indoors without masks. Please know that this does not currently pertain to staff working in healthcare nor to residents living in long-term care or congregate care facilities. When we receive guidance that is applicable to us in long-term care, we will let you know what that means for us. At this time, we will continue to follow our guidance to help keep our members as safe as possible.

Activities:

With the drop in cases, we do plan to slowly restart larger group activities. Our life enrichment team has been busy solidifying plans to ensure safety while balancing the members' well-being and will be implementing these activities as able, soon. Please keep in mind that we will follow social distancing requirements, which does somewhat limit group sizes, again for safety.

Indoor Visits – Mondays through Saturdays:

Please continue to call and schedule indoor visits with your loved one here. Visits can occur more than once per month and we continue to have open timeslots. Prior to these visits, we will continue to screen visitors for COVID symptoms, but we will not be requiring COVID rapid swabs prior to your visit starting.

COVID-19 Testing:

In addition, because the cases are dropping in our county and we are not in an outbreak status, we do not need to do routine nasal swabs on the members at this point. We will test if they are symptomatic. The staff are currently being tested weekly.

Please know that if at any point we receive any additional cases in our Veterans Home, or if the cases spike in our area, we will need to cease visits and go back to a routine testing schedule. But for now, we are so happy to be able to continue with our re-opening plans.

Questions:

If you have any questions, contact Katie Plendl at 715-720-6775 or Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov.

Sincerely,
Megan Corcoran

Veterans Home COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan

First and foremost, our priority is to keep everyone safe and healthy. We are in close contact with our medical director, WDVA, other providers, and state and local health officials to ensure we are taking all appropriate steps at this time. We are following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and state and local health officials to protect our members and staff from this virus, and are taking every action possible to prevent it from spreading in our care community.

The following is a summary of our COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan.

- Utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as directed by CMS guidelines. Staff continues to wear PPE, including KN95 masks, eye protection, gloves, and gowns depending on the community's COVID-19 status. Members are asked to wear a face covering when interfacing with others or when out of their rooms.
- Screening and monitoring members and staff for symptoms. We have increased our screening and monitoring of members and staff for COVID-19 symptoms. COVID-19 symptoms include 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, or diarrhea.

We all play a part in keeping ourselves and others healthy. Please wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, wear a mask or face covering, and practice social distancing.

We continue to educate members and staff on COVID-19. For additional information, please visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html or the Wisconsin Department of Health's website at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov.

- Tracing individuals who come in contact with anyone affected. The community will work with the tracing staff from state and local health departments to assess all who may have come in close contact with an affected individual. We will continue to follow all requirements in implementing the next steps which may include self-monitoring as determined by health officials.
- Testing members and staff for COVID-19. We are following all guidance from federal, state and local health officials on testing required for members and staff. The frequency of routine testing is determined based on the number of COVID-19 cases in the local county. Additionally, those who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms are tested to quickly identify and isolate members and staff who may be positive for COVID-19. Once there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, testing is increased to every three to seven days until testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 infection among staff or members for a period of at least 14 days since the most recent positive result.
- Quarantining COVID-19 positive members and implementing enhanced infection control measures. We have established a designated area in the building for any COVID-19 positive members, and they are cared for and supported by designated staff. We continue to follow all infection control protocols as outlined by the CDC, CMS, and state and local health officials. COVID-19 positive members remain in quarantine until well and cleared by medical professionals, as well as meet the CDC symptom-based criteria for return to normal activity.
- Advising COVID-19 positive staff to take all appropriate measures. For the health and well-being of our care community, any staff member with a COVID-19 diagnosis must quarantine at home, contact a medical provider for care, and notify their supervisor. We are following CDC guidance on the return-to-work criteria for health care professionals with confirmed COVID-19.
- Taking environmental safety precautions. Housekeeping staff continues to take extra measures to clean and disinfect all high-touch areas throughout the building. This includes countertops

and tables, faucet handles, toilet flush handles, doorknobs, door handles, crash bars, bathroom and kitchen areas, elevator call buttons, and handrails.

- Adhering to safe visitation procedures. We are committed to offering visitation that supports each member's physical, mental, psychosocial well-being, and quality of life. Visitation may be conducted through different means based on the community's structure and members' needs.

Please know the visitation options may vary based on the community's COVID-19 status. To discuss current visit options and schedule a visit with a loved one, contact [Katie Plendl](mailto:Katie.Plendl@va.gov) at 715-720-6775 or at Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov. Currently as of today, closed window visits and virtual visits are available. Indoor visits will begin soon. No reservation is needed for a closed window visit.

Closed Window Visits: Closed window visits pose no risk of virus transmission.

Virtual visits: We encourage loved ones to communicate with members by phone, letters, video chat, and/or social media. We understand that it is hard to not have visitors, especially family. Please contact the community at 715-720-6775 for questions or assistance with these communication methods.

Compassionate care visits: Visitors who need to enter the community for compassionate care situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to assure safety for all.

Indoor Visits: Indoor visits will be offered based on the following guidance and criteria from CMS:

- The care community has had no new onset of COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days and is not currently conducting outbreak testing.
- Visitors must adhere to the core principles of infection control and will be monitored by staff for appropriate mask use, social distancing, and hand hygiene.
- For the safety and well-being of those in the care community, a limited number of visitors are allowed at one time. Currently, two visitors per member can be accommodated. Visits will generally take place in a common area inside the community that is cleaned and sanitized regularly and between visits. Additionally, the community maintains a calendar that identifies the days, times, and length of potential visits.

Please note the community will screen visitors for COVID-19 when they arrive for indoor and compassionate care visits.

We are excited to see our members reunite with their loved ones, when able!

- Assuring safe congregate dining and group activities. Communal dining and congregate group activities may be offered while adhering to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention. This includes social distancing, face covering, and appropriate hand hygiene by members and staff.

We continue to be in close communications with our medical director, WDVA, other providers, and state and local health officials. We are also monitoring new information from the CDC, CMS, and state and local health departments to ensure we are taking the appropriate next steps.

Thank you for your support and understanding; we are all in this together. Please do not hesitate to contact Katie Plendl, Director of Admissions and Marketing at 715-720-6775 or Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov with any questions or concerns you may have.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan M. Corcoran', written in a cursive style.

Megan M. Corcoran, NHA | Administrator
Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls