



8.11.2021 Veterans Home Weekly Family Updates

Dear Family and Friends,

As we witness COVID-19's Delta variant spread across the US, the Veterans Home is closely following all CDC and CMS guidelines to ensure our members, team members, and families stay healthy. It is also our priority to ensure safe visitation options continue being available, so we uphold residents' quality of life.

Here is our current and cumulative information:

Current Active COVID-19 Confirmed Positive:	1
Current Active COVID-19 Suspected Positive:	0
Cumulative COVID-19 Confirmed Positive:	64 (twenty-four members, thirty-seven 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)

COVID -19 Update:

Since my call this morning, we were able to test all staff at the Veterans Home. We are happy to report that no other cases of COVID-19 have been identified at this point. We continue to only have one active team member case of COVID-19. We will continue with frequent outbreak testing for all members and staff as directed by CMS and public health.

Reopening for Visits 8-12-2021:

Because no other cases have been identified at this time, we are able to reopen for family and friend visits starting on Thursday, August 12th. If you would like to have a COVID test prior to your visit, you may get one in the community or ask the receptionist when you arrive so a staff member can come and test you before your visit with your loved one.

Requirements for Visits:

Per the CDC, everyone living in areas of "high" or "substantial" levels of community transmission must wear masks in public regardless of vaccination status. Currently, Chippewa County continues to have a HIGH community transmission rate.

- Therefore, masks ARE REQUIRED when on-site at the Veterans Home, regardless of vaccination status.
- Please also help the member put on a mask when you are visiting to provide additional protection for everyone involved in the visit.
- Sanitize your hands when you arrive.
- Stay at least 6' away from the member to ensure safety.

As we know more, emails and phone calls will go out again. See below for information about our Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan, as well as information about our active and cumulative COVID cases.

Please call 715-720-6775 or email veterans.home-cf@dva.wi.gov if you have further questions.

Veterans Home COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Response Action Plan

First and foremost, our priority is to keep everyone safe and healthy. We continue following guidance from our medical director, 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 team members 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.

- Encouraging members and team members to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to protect yourself and others, particularly older adults and those with underlying health conditions who are at increased risk for severe complications. The Delta variant now accounts for the majority of COVID-19 cases in the US because it is much more transmissible than previous strains. This poses as a major risk to anyone unvaccinated. Therefore, we continue to encourage all members, team members, and family members to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and will provide resources and support to those who need it.
- Utilizing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), as directed by CMS guidelines, including a well-fitting face covering or mask that covers the mouth and nose. Team members continue to wear PPE, including masks, eye protection, gloves, and gowns depending on the community's COVID-19 status and our county's transmission and positivity rates. Members and visitors are asked to wear a face covering when interfacing with others, *if not yet fully vaccinated** or if our county's community transmission rate is "high" or "substantial".
- Screening and monitoring members and team members for symptoms. We have increased our screening and monitoring of members and team members 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, 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 well-fitting mask or face covering, and practice social distancing as appropriate.

We continue to educate members and team members about COVID-19. For additional information, please visit the CDC's website or the Wisconsin Department of Health's [website](#). You may also see any employee to request additional information.

- Using alcohol-based hand rub regularly.
- Tracing individuals who come in contact with anyone affected. The community will work with 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 team members for COVID-19 based on federal and state guidance. We are following all guidance from federal, state, and local health officials on testing required for members and team members. The frequency of routine testing is determined based on the number of COVID-19 cases in the local county. Those who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms are tested to quickly identify and isolate members and team members who may be positive for

COVID-19. In addition, those who have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 are tested, regardless of vaccination status or symptoms. Once there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, testing is increased to every three days to seven days until testing identifies no new cases of COVID-19 infection among team members 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 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 they are well and cleared by medical professionals, and meet the CDC symptom-based criteria for return to normal activity.
- Advising COVID-19 positive team members to take all appropriate measures. For the health and well-being of our care community, any team member with a COVID-19 diagnosis will 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 diagnoses.
 - Taking environmental safety precautions. Our housekeeping team continues to take extra measures to clean and disinfect all high-touch areas throughout the buildings. This includes countertops and tables, faucet handles, toilet flush handles, door knobs, door handles, crash bars, bathroom and kitchen areas, elevator call buttons, and hand rails.
 - 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 covering faces with masks per CDC and CMS guidance, and practicing proper hand hygiene.
 - Adhering to safe visitation procedures, including maintaining six feet of distance between persons. We are committed to offering visitation that supports each member's physical, mental, and psychosocial well-being, and quality of life. Visitation may be conducted through different means based on our community's structure and members' needs, such as in members' rooms, and for circumstances beyond compassionate care situations.

Safe Visitation Procedures

General Infection Control Practices for all In-Person Visits: Each visitor will be screened for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and entry will be denied for those who exhibit signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19. All visitors must complete hand hygiene with an alcohol-based hand rub upon arrival and wear a well-fitting face covering or mask that completely covers the mouth and nose. We also ask visitors and members to avoid congregating in common areas.

Team members will continue to wear masks and appropriate PPE regardless of vaccination status.

Due to the spread of the Delta variant, domestic travel guidance for unvaccinated individuals has been revised by the CDC. Requirements include testing before and after travel, self-monitoring for symptoms, and to stay home for a total of seven days after returning from a trip.

The CDC has also released new guidance relating to the use of masks in public spaces in response to the highly contagious Delta variant. This guidance asks all individuals in specific areas of the US to continue wearing masks indoors. Those residing in areas where COVID-19 has a "high" or "substantial" level of community transmission must wear masks regardless of vaccination status. For county-specific community transmission rates, please see the CDC's website.

Visitation options vary based on the community's COVID-19 status, our county's positivity rate, our county's rate of community transmission, and the rate of vaccination among members and team members.

Visitation options may include:

Virtual Visits: We always encourage loved ones to communicate with members by phone, letters, video chat, and/or social media. Please contact our Life Enrichment team for assistance with these communication methods, if needed.

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

Outdoor Visits: Outdoor visits pose a lower risk of virus transmission due to increased space and airflow. Please note that state and federal health officials advise that it is safest for members to participate in outdoor visits whenever comfortably possible.

Compassionate Care Visits: As aligned with state and federal guidance, we support visits for all types of compassionate care needs, including those beyond end-of-life or hospice situations such as to support a member. Compassionate care visits are allowed at all times regardless of a member's vaccination status, our county's positivity rate, county's or our outbreak status.

Indoor Visits: If all participants are *fully vaccinated** and our county community transmission rate is "low" or "moderate", members, families, and friends may visit without wearing masks and without socially distancing if alone in a member's room. If a visitor is *unvaccinated** and our county community transmission rate is "low" or "moderate", they may visit with a *fully vaccinated** member alone in a members' room without socially distancing while wearing well-fitting face masks.

We are overjoyed to support indoor visits for all members with exception in the following instances:

- Members currently positive for COVID-19 may not participate in indoor visits, despite vaccination status, until they meet the criteria for discontinuing transmission-based precautions.
- Members in quarantine due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 may not participate in indoor visits, despite vaccination status, until they meet the criteria to be released from quarantine.
- Unvaccinated members may not participate in indoor visits if our county's positivity rate is greater than 10% and less than 70% of our members are fully vaccinated.

During indoor visits, we'll ask visitors to participate in a COVID-19 screening, use an alcohol-based hand-rub, and avoid congregating in common areas. If not yet *fully vaccinated** or if our county community transmission rate is "high" or "substantial", individuals are also asked to wear a well-fitting face mask that covers the mouth and nose.

**Unvaccinated individuals also includes those not yet fully vaccinated—individuals are deemed fully vaccinated against COVID-19 two weeks after their final dose of the vaccine.*

To discuss safe visiting options or for help coordinating a visit, contact us: 715-720-6775. [You may also see any employee for assistance.](#)

Visitation Restrictions

In the event our community confirms a positive case of COVID-19 among our members or team members, we will temporarily suspend indoor visits while we conduct facility-wide testing. If our first round of testing identifies additional cases of the virus within other areas of our senior community, indoor visitation will be suspended until we meet the criteria to discontinue outbreak testing.

We will resume indoor visitation per the following recommendations:

- Members of the COVID-positive affected household(s) may receive visitors 14 days after testing stops.
- All other members may accept visitors if our first round of testing reveals no additional COVID-19 cases in other areas of our care community.

We continue to be in close communications with our medical director, 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.

Thanks to the success of the COVID-19 vaccines, we have all witnessed a refreshing, much needed step towards safely resuming our normal routines. It has been wonderful to see our members' loved ones on-site at Veterans Home, as able. Please know we are here to help accommodate visits with our members in a way that is appropriate for our physical setting, meets personal needs, and maintains the comfort and safety of all.

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