



State of Idaho
DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES
“Caring for America’s Heroes”



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Governor

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To Our Valued Residents and Family Members:

The Idaho Division of Veterans Services (IDVS) remains focused to taking the necessary and critical precautions to mitigate the risk of introduction and spread of COVID-19, and ensure the safety and well-being of our residents, staff and visitors by having a well-thought-out strategy in place as we plan to reopen our three State Veterans Homes.

Given the vulnerable nature of our nursing home population, combined with the inherent risks of congregate living in a healthcare setting, decisions on relaxing restrictions and reopening visitation within the Homes have been made with careful review, considerations, and research. These decisions have also been made in collaboration with the recommendations received from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and with our State and local health officials.

Attached to this letter is IDVS' detailed *COVID-19 Related Phased Reopening Plan & Procedure* for our three Homes.

While IDVS' Reopening Plan correlates with *Idaho Rebounds* guidelines for opening Idaho, it's also important to understand it contains a supplemental three phased approach. As such, IDVS' considerations for allowing visitation and services in each phase are contingent on the degree to which we have limited community spread of COVID-19 in each location, as well as several facility-level factors to include the number of COVID-19 cases in the facility, testing capabilities, staffing shortages, and personal protective equipment supply-on-hand.

While the implementation criteria and anticipated dates for each of the three phases can be found in the first and second columns of IDVS' Plan, it is also important to recognize that the three State Veterans Homes may be at different phases at any given time since the pandemic is affecting communities in different ways. For instance, should there be a new or rebound community outbreak, or a confirmed COVID-19 transmission within the facility, then that Home will revert to the highest level of mitigations (Phase 1).

It is also likely that nursing facilities within each community will have varying limitations from the State Veterans Homes since each facility has their own operational plan, criteria, and factors they are using to inform their decisions about relaxing restrictions and preventing the transmission of COVID-19 in their buildings. Therefore, within the same town, one facility may determine that they can allow multiple visitors in their building on any given day, while another facility is limiting visitations and services or being unable to lift any restrictions.

Based on our criteria for progressing through Phases 1 and 2, in-person visitations within the State Veterans Homes will start in Phase 3, which is anticipated to begin on or after Monday, June 29, 2020.

Please understand the critical importance of limiting COVID-19 exposure and preventing the spread of the virus within the Veterans Homes requires firm efforts and considerations by all of us. The visitation considerations during Phase 3 include the following conditions:

- All visits will need be scheduled in advance with the facility's designated visitation coordinator and are to be scheduled at least 1-day prior to the visit. This is necessary to provide adequate staffing to assist with maintaining infection control procedures and physical distancing (at least 6 feet) during the duration of the visitation. Compassionate care situations only (e.g. end of life care situations) may be allowed without providing 1-day prior notice depending on the circumstance.

To schedule a time to visit in-person with your loved one, please contact your Veterans Home team visitation coordinator at:

- Boise Veterans Home: (208) 780-1710
- Lewiston Veterans Home: (208) 750-3673
- Pocatello Veterans Home: (208) 235-7800

- Scheduled visitation hours will be from 9AM - 4PM and may be limited to 1 hour per visit or less. There may be days we need to require shortening visit times to allow for more residents to have visitors on a given day. Exceptions may be made outside these hours and timeframe for special circumstances (e.g. end of life care situations) with the approval of the Director of Nursing Services or the Home Administrator.
- Unscheduled visits may be denied by the facility
- The facility will limit visitors to no more than 1 visitor per resident, and there may be no more than a total of 2 visitors in the facility at any one time. This is necessary so we can provide adequate staffing to assist with maintaining infection control procedures and physical distancing (at least 6 feet) during the duration of the visitation. Compassionate care situations only (e.g. end of life situations) may allow no more than 3 visitors depending on circumstance.
- Visitors under the age of 16 will be unable to enter the facility except in compassionate care situations. In these situations, only one child will be permitted at a time and with the direct supervision of a parent/guardian.
- All visitors will be screened. This screening will be done prior to entering the designated visitation area or resident care areas and will include risk assessment questioning, symptomology, and temperature assessment per CDC and CMS guidance. Those who do not meet the screening criteria will be restricted entry to the facility.
- All visitors will be required to perform proper hand hygiene upon entry into the facility. Visitors will also be provided an opportunity to perform hand hygiene after their visit.
- All visitors must maintain physical distancing (at least 6 feet). Additionally, they will be required to wear a facility provided cloth face covering and cloth gown at all times during the duration of their visit. The facility provided cloth face covering and cloth gown must be returned in the designated bin prior to the visitor leaving and will be properly laundered daily by the facility.
- All visits will be held in a designated visitation room, but outside visitations are encouraged, weather permitting. If the resident is unable to be transported to the visitation area then the visit can take place in the resident's room with the defined Universal Source Control precautions to include proper hand hygiene, physical distancing, and wearing a facility provided cloth gown and a facemask.

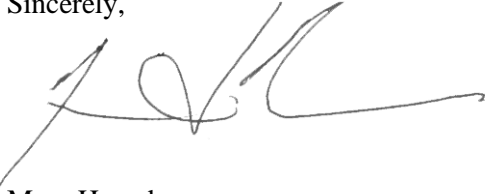
The ability of our Homes to safely continue in-person visitation will require the support and assistance of our residents and families by following the above safety protocol and maintaining our rigorous infection prevention and control procedures. For the safety of everyone during this pandemic, visitors who are unable or unwilling to maintain these precautions will be restricted and denied entry to the facility.

As families begin visiting the Homes again, you may notice some restructuring along with some new staffing positions to include our new security services personnel who will be assisting us with our screening process. Last June 2019, as part of our Emergency Preparedness and Continuity of Operations Plan, all three homes had a representative from Idaho Building Safety conduct a safety & security risk assessment. As a result of this assessment, it was determined it would be advantageous to have security personnel stationed in the facility. This need was placed in last year's budget request, which was approved this past legislative session beginning this July. We are in the process of entering into a contractual agreement with a professional security company for these services.

We remain committed to providing excellent services and care, and we welcome your questions along with your input on how to maintain our residents, staff and visitor's health and safety during this pandemic. Should you have any questions or feedback, please be sure to contact your State Veterans Home Administrator or the Director of Nursing Services.

We appreciate your continued support and trusting in us to care for you or your loved one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marv Hagedorn', written in a cursive style.

Marv Hagedorn
Chief Administrator
Idaho Division of Veterans Services