

MAY 21, 2020

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to share guidance with GPD grantees for COVID-19 positive and presumptive positive Veterans temporarily placed in hotels and motels. It is expected that the grantee will develop a plan to ensure Veterans' medical, mental health, and social needs are met during isolation. For GPD Veterans in hotels and motels who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are presumptive positive, the grantee should develop a plan to provide daily wellness and symptom checks. These may be conducted in-person or virtually and should be documented in the Veteran's chart.

## Background

Homeless and formerly homeless Veterans are uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19 due to their living conditions, advanced age, and high rate of chronic health problems. To facilitate isolation and quarantine capabilities for Veterans, GPD programs have increased their use of temporary placements in hotels and motels. The written guidance and algorithm contained in this document assists the grantee with developing a plan for appropriate assessment and follow-up during Veteran stays in hotels and motels. For COVID-19 positive and presumptive positive Veterans, this includes inquiring about symptoms and taking appropriate steps based on Veteran response.

For Veterans who are temporarily staying in hotels and motels, but are not COVID-19 positive or presumptive positive, please note Isolation Option 4 in the document [Options for Social Isolation Under the COVID-19 National Emergency: Guidance for VA-Funded Community Homeless Programs](#):

*Isolation Option 4: The approval of such a plan is contingent upon the grantee having a plan to be able to check on the Veteran daily (remote contact allowed) for wellness checks, and support services as needed. In addition, a plan for meals for the Veteran must be in place.*

Those Veterans also require daily wellness checks as outlined above, likely to be more focused on Veteran case management needs and follow-up. In those cases, follow-up steps related to COVID-19 would only take place if the Veteran reported any symptoms that appeared to indicate a need for screening.

## Approach

Our overall goal is safety and support for Veterans and grantees. The VAMC and grantee should work closely together to ensure there is a protocol in place that adequately addresses Veteran safety during hotel and motel placement, to include daily wellness checks. The plan should be developed, reviewed with the VAMC, communicated, implemented, and updated as needed. As things change rapidly, it is crucial that VAMC and GPD grantee communication and collaboration is frequent, clear, and intentional. Once the plan is approved by the grantee and VAMC, it is important that it is shared with all stakeholders, particularly the impacted Veterans. Stakeholders may include community partners, involved government entities, or local public health authorities. In communities that have hotels or motels with 24/7 medical staff on-site providing comprehensive checks, identifying who will take the lead with these checks is key. Communication of the developed plan, including specific steps and roles, is necessary in order to optimize resources, increase efficiency and efficacy, and reduce confusion for all involved.

We have included a wellness and symptom check algorithm below. Questions should be asked in a respectful, culturally competent, and helpful way. It is imperative that in addition to the daily assessment of the Veteran's medical, mental health and social status and needs, the assessor provides any needed follow-up connections and resource referrals, which may include mental health and substance use supports at the VAMC or in the community.

If the person conducting the check discovers that there are new symptoms or symptoms have worsened, the Veteran should be instructed to call the Clinical Contact Center (CCC). If there is concern the Veteran is not well enough to make this call, the person conducting the check should assist with the call and should call 9-1-1 if any symptom appears life-threatening. All Veterans staying in hotels and motels should be provided with the CCC number and instructed how to call in the case of worsening symptoms. If Veterans are non-VA healthcare eligible, the CCC line can be utilized for

guidance and may result in a referral to community resources. Grantees should be aware of COVID-19 related community resources for Veterans who are non-VA healthcare eligible.

Grantees should reference *How to Discontinue Home Isolation* in <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html> to determine when the Veteran can return to the GPD site. Consultation with the VAMC or local public health authorities may be necessary to make this decision

### **Wellness Check Algorithm for COVID-19+ Veterans Placed in Hotel/Motels**

