

SSVF Grantee Guidance for Ongoing Health and Symptoms Checks for COVID-19 Positive and Presumptive Positive Veterans

Purpose

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program has responded to the COVID-19 crisis, in part, by allowing SSVF Grantees the ability to place eligible Veterans who would otherwise be in congregate shelter settings or on the streets into hotel and motels to mitigate the risk of those Veterans contracting COVID-19. In most instances the Veterans placed in hotels are not diagnosed with COVID-19, but there have been cases of Veterans entering hotels with COVID-19 or having contracted it after hotel placement.

The purpose of this document is to offer guidance to SSVF Grantees for COVID-19 positive, presumptive positive and at-risk Veterans temporarily placed in hotels and motels. This guidance can also be applied to Veterans in permanent housing at risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19. It is expected that Grantees will implement a plan to ensure Veterans' needs are met, including medical and crisis care. For SSVF-enrolled Veterans in hotels and motels who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are presumptive positive, the Grantee should develop a plan to ensure daily wellness and symptom checks are completed. These may be done in-person or virtually and should be coordinated with VA health or local public health services; it may also be a local partner who performs health checks and communicates the basic results and recommended follow up to the SSVF Grantee. In summary, Grantees should make every effort to check in with all Veterans – with a priority on those who are COVID-19 positive or presumptive positive – to ensure their immediate health needs are addressed and those Veterans remain safe.

Approach

VA's primary goal is safety for everyone involved and support services for Veterans. A coordination plan should be developed amongst local Grantees, VA partners and other community providers as appropriate. The plan should be reviewed and updated as needed. The plan should identify:

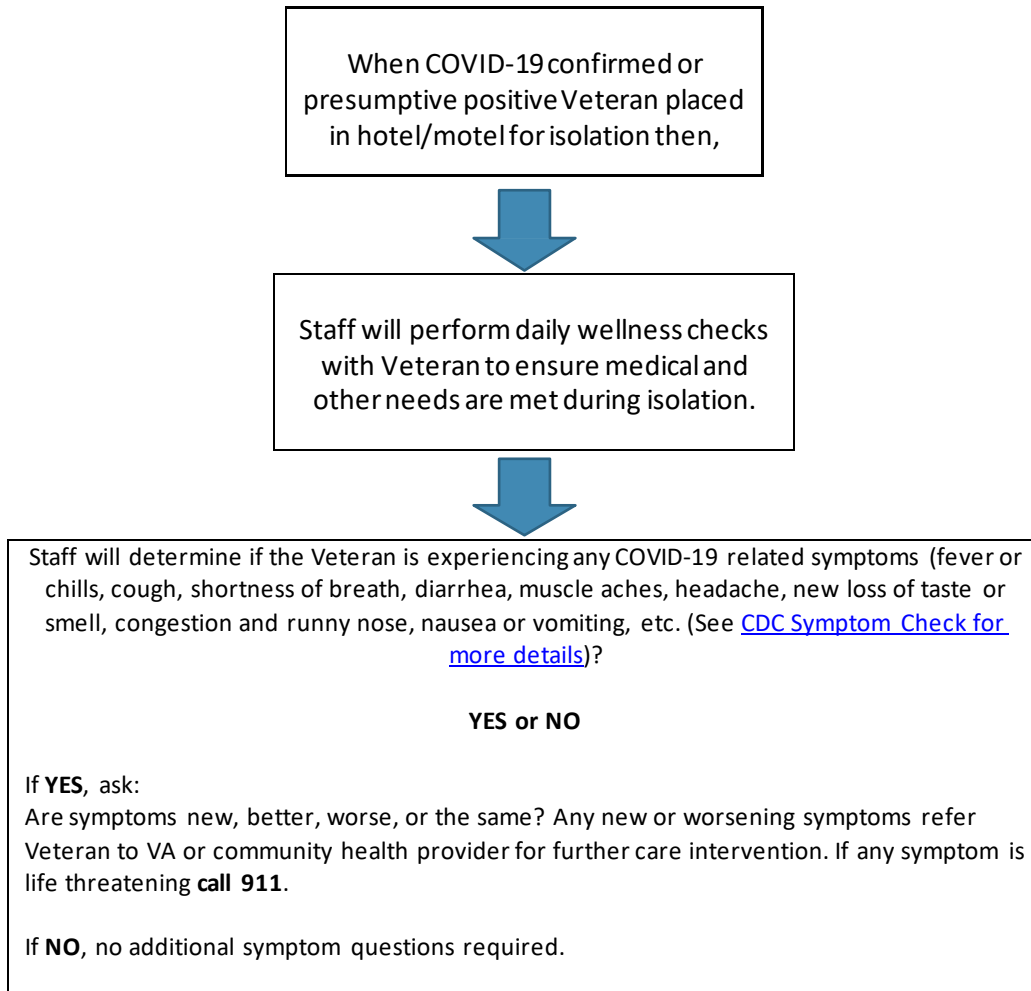
- Screening process to be adopted by SSVF Grantees or its partner providers
- Process to follow if a Veteran is found to have new or worsening COVID-19 symptoms.
 - What should be done for those with urgent or emergency care needs?
 - What should be done for those with non-urgent care needs?
- A clear point of contact with the SSVF Grantee to be contacted when the Veteran has an identified need.
- A timeline for the SSVF Grantee contacts to be notified for non-urgent, urgent or emergency needs.
- A clear point of contact with any other providers involved in the process to review plan and update as needed.

If the person conducting the check discovers that there are new COVID-19 symptoms or symptoms have worsened, the SSVF staff person should work with the Veteran to contact the appropriate health resource or provider for that Veteran. If the Veteran is not well enough to contact appropriate health resources, the SSVF staff or partner conducting the check should assist. Emergency 9-1-1 should be contacted if any symptom appears emergent.

As the public health crisis continues to evolve, it is crucial that SSVF Grantees and their partners' communication and collaboration is frequent, clear, and intentional. Non-VA stakeholders may include community partners, involved government entities, or local public health authorities. In communities that have locally managed and supported (such as through the CoC or public health entity) 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 coordination 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 flow chart below which focuses on COVID-19 positive Veterans but also provides a general health inquiry outline for all Veterans served by SSVF, including those in permanent housing. It is imperative that SSVF staff continue to provide housing-focused case management services as their primary driving interaction with enrolled Veterans, in addition to basic health and safety checks.

Wellness Check Flow Chart for COVID-19 Positive, Presumptive and At-Risk Veterans Placed in Hotel/Motels



Additional Resources

VA Medical Center locations and contact information:

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp>

VA Medical Center Online COVID-19 Screening Tool

<https://www.va.gov/covid19screen/>

CDC Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/index.html>