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VA releases COVID-19 Response Report

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs today announced publication of its [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Response Report](#) detailing its efforts to address the pandemic from early January through June 30.

The report results are a continuation of VA's pledge to share best practices and lessons learned with other government agencies and the private health care system while the country fights COVID-19.

"As the nation's largest integrated health care system, VA's COVID-19 response has been robust and far-reaching. This includes 24 current and 75 completed Fourth Mission assignments involving more than 2,000 VA employees helping to support non-Veteran patients and non-VA health care systems," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This report reflects VA's agility throughout the pandemic to adapt based on lessons learned in order to continue providing safe, quality health care to Veterans as we continue to battle the pandemic."

The COVID-19 Response Report provides an extensive look at VA's complex COVID-19 response, including the department's planning and preparation ahead of the pandemic; the initial crisis response; key COVID-19 policies and directives; interactions and interdependencies with federal and state agencies; and adaptations to health care operations. It provides a forthright view of challenges and issues that VA needed to address in order to effectively respond to the pandemic, such as exchanging supplies, Personal Protective Equipment and deploying health care personnel across the enterprise to meet critical needs in certain areas.

The department implemented a wide range of actions to ensure the safety of its patients and employees while never closing its doors. As of November 6, VA has tested 879,457 Veterans and employees for COVID-19 and diagnosed 67,905 Veterans with COVID-19, 14,168 of whom were admitted to a VA medical center for care. VA has hired more than 59,095 new employees since March 29 in response to the surge in demand for care during the pandemic. In addition, VA moved many appointments to telehealth meetings to keep Veterans and employees safe and has seen a 1,525% increase in home or offsite telehealth visits.

As of June 29, VA participated in more than 90 and led 28 multiple-site COVID-19 research studies. Notably, VA participated in research on 3D-printed respirator masks and convalescent plasma to treat COVID-19 patients, as well as other promising therapeutics, and laid the groundwork for participation in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials.

The report was compiled through more than 90 interviews with health care leaders and stakeholders as well as a variety of documents and data pertaining to the Veterans Integrated Service Networks and health care enterprise. It cites conclusions, findings and recommendations across several categories, including recognition of the threat and planning; national and interagency coordination; emergency management and readiness; data and analytics; capacity, supply chain and testing; clinical operations; research; and moving forward.

VA expects to develop further reports to document the evolution of VA's response to the pandemic and consider additional strategic follow-up actions informed by the ongoing experience.

A [synopsis](#) of VA's COVID-19 Response Report and the [full report](#) are available on the VA website. VA also released its [COVID-19 Response Plan](#) in March and its [Charting the Course Plan](#) for how VA facilities would resume services temporarily halted by the crisis in May.

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