

# MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Coronavirus

As countries around the world continue to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, it is clear the VA's role in caring for the nation's Veterans is more important than ever and we are facing this challenge head-on.

The past few weeks have brought this nation, our city, and the hospital to an unprecedented place. Many of our team members are on the front line caring for patients in traditional ways but in a safer environment. They are moving to a virtual care model unlike anything we have tried before. Others are being asked to take on new tasks and playing significant support roles to help all our VA facilities be ready for whatever comes. We are all vital to the mission of caring for our Veterans and each other and our staff is doing a tremendous job.

Here are a few of the significant changes that have happened to create a safer environment, while continuing to provide the great care our Veterans deserve.

- We have directed all our facilities to establish new protocols to protect our employees and Veterans that include limiting the number of entrances and setting up active screening procedures.

- We are asking Veterans to call in before showing up and are encouraging telehealth and other distance-care services when possible. Visitors are not

being allowed in our medical center or clinics except for Veterans who need assistance to complete their appointment, critical care or end-of-life patients.

- While we are currently postponing truly elective procedures to minimize risk to those patients, we continue to provide urgent and emergent procedures and work closely with all patients to ensure they receive the right care at the right time while minimizing risk. We are providing virtual care to as many patients as possible based on their clinical need and we are not turning away any Veteran who needs VA care.

- We have created a dedicated unit for patients suspected of having coronavirus although, to date, we have no positive patients.

- We have moved our chemotherapy infusion clinic to maximize distance between this clinic and inpatient areas. These Veterans are particularly vulnerable – creating separation for them is essential to ensuring their safety.

- Reduced our Volunteers for their safety. We love our volunteers, but many are more vulnerable to COVID.

In the coming days, we will offer drive-up testing for Veterans referred by our VA team. Veterans experiencing symptoms – fever, new or worsening chronic cough, new or worsening chronic shortness of breath – should call our Telephone

Advice Program (TAP) line at (843) 789-6400 or 1-888-878-6884 to speak with a nurse. If the Veteran needs to be tested for Coronavirus, they will be given an appointment to come to the VAMC drive-up testing site. In addition to calling first, consider using virtual care options such as [telehealth](#) or My Health-Vet [Secure Messaging](#). Read VA's latest information on the new coronavirus at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>.

We will handle this challenge as we have handled others – with steadiness, professionalism, excellence and devotion to our VA family and partners. Thank you for sharing in this commitment and for checking on the Veterans you know while maintaining safe social distance practices. Together, we will get through this and I firmly believe once the pandemic passes we will be stronger as a medical center and as a VA and Veteran community.

Sincerely,



Ronnie Smith, MSHA, MBA,  
Acting Director & CEO



Ronnie Smith, MSHA, MBA  
Acting Medical Center Director

**CHECK IT OUT-**  
[CHARLESTON VAMC](#)  
[VIRTUAL TOUR](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Due to concerns over coronavirus, and the importance of social distancing, all upcoming events are postponed indefinitely. We will announce events as they are rescheduled.*

## SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKES EVERYONE!

*#BeThere*

Veterans Crisis Line:  
1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat at:  
[www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

Text: 838255



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