

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

Office of Public Affairs  
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 24, 2022

**VHA Transitions to COVID-19 Operational Plan by Implementing Health Protection Levels to Enhance Safety of Veterans, Visitors and Employees**

**NEW ORLEANS —** Today, the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System is implementing COVID-19 Health Protection Levels as part VA's consistent, nationwide approach for Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities to adjust COVID-19 safety protocols locally as needed.

The three VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels – low, medium, and high – align with CDC's Community Transmission levels, which are based on new COVID cases and percentage of positive tests.

Starting today, the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System in New Orleans is at level High. The VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Level will be updated as needed on Mondays.

"Local Veterans are resolute about receiving their care at our facility and we want to keep them safe during the ups and downs of COVID-19 community spread," said Medical Center Director Fernando Rivera. "Instead of increasing or decreasing access to care, safety protocols will be adjusted based on COVID-19 levels in the community."

Masks are required regardless of the level, but requirements for self-screening, visitation, and physical distancing vary:

Low:

1. Masks are required
2. Self-screening is required
3. Visitors are welcome
4. Physical distancing is not required

Medium:

1. Masks are required
2. Self-screening is required
3. Care partner welcome only
4. Physical distancing is not required

High:

1. Masks are required
2. Screenings will be performed by staff at the entrance. Care team-approved visitors only
3. Physical distancing is required

Please visit <https://www.va.gov/southeast-louisiana-health-care/> or call 1-800-935-8387 for current protection levels before your next visit. If patients or visitors are heading to a VA facility in another parish, they should check with that health facility to determine the facility's VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Level.

Visit [www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/](http://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/) for questions and answers regarding the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels.

###