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News Release

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VA announces ‘Fourth Mission,’ actions to help America respond to COVID-19

WASHINGTON – Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced several actions it has taken to help all Americans during the COVID-19 outbreak.

“VA is committed to helping the nation in this effort to combat COVID-19,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Helping Veterans is our first mission, but in many locations across the country we’re helping states and local communities. VA is in this fight not only for the millions of Veterans we serve each day; we’re in the fight for the people of the United States.”

VA traditionally provides Veterans’ healthcare, benefits and memorial affairs. In times of national crisis, such as the current Coronavirus pandemic, VA provides services to the nation based on requests from states, while being clear that Veterans are first. This is known as VA’s Fourth Mission.

VA has determined to make 1,500 beds available for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These beds will be a combination of acute care and intensive care beds for non-Veteran patients available at various VA locations around the country.

- For example, VA recently opened 35 beds between the Ann Arbor and Detroit VA Medical Centers to non-Veteran critical and non-critical COVID-19 patients.

VA is caring for dozens of non-Veteran patients for COVID-19 across the country, pursuant to requests from FEMA and as part of the emergency response effort. As of this week, VA has treated non-Veterans in the following locations:

- VA New York Harbor (New York: 80 patients, 30 discharges, 5 deaths.
- VA New Jersey: 24 patients, 6 discharges, 1 death.
- VA Ann Arbor, Michigan: 17 patients, 5 discharges, no deaths.
- VA Detroit, Michigan: 10 patients, 2 discharges, no deaths.
- VA Albuquerque, New Mexico: 4 patients, 1 discharge.

VA continues to accept mission assignments from FEMA to open beds for non-Veteran patients, after a determination is made that care to Veterans will not be disrupted.

- In the last few days, VA has made 35 beds available for the community at three facilities in Illinois: the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, the Marion VA Medical Center, and the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center.
- Additionally, VA recently opened 18 beds at the Overton Brooks VA Medical Center in Louisiana.

VA is caring for people in nursing homes who are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 due to age or pre-existing medical conditions.

- Our VA facility in Providence, Rhode Island has cared for 7 community nursing home patients. Six of the 7 were transferred back to the community nursing home; the remaining patient died.

Our VA facility in Bedford, Massachusetts has cared for 10 state Veterans Home patients.

- On April 4, 12 VA staffers were deployed to care for patients in two private nursing homes in Massachusetts: the Hunt Nursing Home in Danvers, and the Charwell Nursing Home in Norwood.

VA is reaching people where they live, by getting our resources to where people need them.

- VA loaned a mobile pharmacy trailer and two VA staff members to the TCF Center in Detroit, Michigan, where the Army Corps of Engineers has set up a makeshift hospital for 1,000 beds. The state of Michigan will provide remaining staff and supplies.
- In New Haven, Connecticut, 3 VA clinicians were recently placed on assignment to provide clinical support for disaster operations related to COVID-19 homeless population.

States that require assistance from VA should request it through their local Department of Health and Human Services Regional Emergency Coordinator — part of FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center. Counties, cities and other municipalities should route all requests for federal support through their respective states.

VA continues to encourage Veterans, staff members and their families to [take precautions](#) to protect against respiratory illnesses caused by COVID-19, the flu and the common cold, and to follow the guidance of their local and state health care and emergency management officials.

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