



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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## VA is protecting and serving all of America

**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced it is helping 38 states and territories with their response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), providing care, services and supplies to hundreds of non-Veterans in this time of uncertainty.

In coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), VA has deployed doctors, nurses and nursing aides to state-run nursing homes in several states where COVID-19 has emerged among vulnerable populations.

Most recently, VA dispatched more than 80 medical professionals to 26 non-VA nursing homes in **Florida**. These employees have begun rotations at the facilities to deliver direct care and advice about controlling infectious diseases.

The Florida mission follows an April 19-June 1 deployment of 90 VA nursing staff to two state-run nursing homes in **New Jersey**. VA has deployed staff to other state-run nursing homes in **Alabama**, **Massachusetts** and **Tennessee**, and is coordinating similar requests for help across the nation.

The department's experience in caring for more complex nursing home patients makes its nursing home workforce a valuable service during this national emergency.

"Americans are coming together to fight COVID-19 in ways we haven't seen since World War II and VA is proud to provide crucial support to non-Veteran nursing home residents around the country," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Our 'Fourth Mission' is to serve all Americans in times of crisis and VA is here for the duration."

Also, in coordination with FEMA, VA has committed to opening 1,500 beds in VA facilities to treat COVID-19 patients and ease the stress that some local hospital networks are facing.

During the last few weeks, the VA facility in **Rhode Island** cared for 7 community nursing home patients and the VA facility in Bedford, **Massachusetts** cared for 10 state Veterans Home patients.

Additionally, to help the U.S. Naval Ship Comfort close out its mission in **New York**, remaining patients were transferred and are being cared for by VA New York Harbor Health Care System and James J. Peters "Bronx" VA Medical Center. As part of VA's Fourth Mission to help community hospitals with humanitarian patients through the COVID-19 pandemic, VA received 12 patients over the past few days: 11 patients are now being cared for by VA health care providers in Brooklyn and Manhattan, while the Bronx has accepted a Veteran patient from the ship.

VA facilities in **California**, **Mississippi**, **New Mexico** and **Texas** have also taken in non-Veteran patients, and dozens of intensive care unit and medical/surgical beds have been made available in **Illinois**, **Iowa**, **Louisiana**, **Michigan**, **New York**, **Oregon** and **Washington**.

The department is also aiding non-Veteran patients in **American Samoa**, **California**, **Guam**, **Iowa**, **North Carolina** and **Texas**.

In addition to VA's work with FEMA, VA is providing a range of services to Veterans and their families in more than a dozen states on its own. For example, VA's Mobile Vet Centers are offering counseling services and outreach to health care workers, and screening assistance in **Colorado**, **Pennsylvania**, **Ohio** and **Texas**. In **South Dakota**, a Mobile Vet Center is providing blood drawing services.

VA is working with several other states on a range of services, such as the provision of masks and test kits, in **Arizona**, **Arkansas**, **Connecticut**, **Delaware**, **Hawaii**, **Idaho**, **Kentucky**, **Minnesota**, **Mississippi**, **Nebraska**, **Nevada**, **New Mexico**, **Oklahoma**, **South Carolina**, **Virginia**, **West Virginia** and **Wisconsin**.

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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