



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Southern Nevada Healthcare System

Media Release

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VASNHS implements additional COVID-19 measures to protect patients, staff

NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev. – While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) still considers COVID-19 to be a low threat to the general American public, the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) is paying special attention to it. As such, out of an abundance of caution due to COVID-19, VASNHS is implementing the following actions to protect patients and staff at North Las Vegas VA Medical Center and VASNHS' community VA clinics.

No-Visitor Policy

Effective immediately VASNHS will implement a "No Visitor" stance, meaning the public and outside visitors will not be permitted to see inpatients at the North Las Vegas Medical Center or accompany Veterans to outpatient appointments at any of VASNHS' community clinics, unless they are directly assisting or caring for a Veteran.

- The only exceptions will be in compassionate cases, when Veterans are in their last stages of life and receiving palliative or hospice care.
- In those cases, visitors will be limited to a specific Veteran's room only.

Cancellation of Elective Surgeries and Non-Urgent Procedures

VASNHS will cease elective surgeries and other non-urgent procedures no later than Wednesday, March 18. This action is being taken to reduce unnecessary hospitalizations and ICU use, freeing up critical resources to specifically address COVID-19. All patients who fall into these categories will be contacted by the facility.

Cancellation of in-person group sessions, classes and courses

VASNHS is canceling all in-person group sessions, classes and courses throughout the healthcare system until further notice. Virtual options such as telehealth and conference calls will be offered as alternatives wherever possible for Veterans participating in these activities.

Fisher House Closure

VASNHS will be closing the VA Southern Nevada Fisher House until further notice. Located on the campus of the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center, the 16-suite, 13,500-square-foot Fisher House is a “comfort home,” providing free lodging for families of wounded, injured and ill military and Veterans while their loved ones undergo treatment at either the VA or Mike O’Callaghan Military Medical Center at Nellis Air Force Base.

The Fisher House closure comes out of concern for the use of shared common areas, which include a spacious kitchen, and large communal living, dining and family rooms. VASNHS Fisher House staff will notify and work with affected individuals and other families requesting temporary lodging to make new arrangements.

“While the COVID-19 risk to the average American remains low, several of our Veterans, staff and volunteers fall into the high-risk categories that are susceptible to this virus,” said William J. Caron, VASNHS Director/CEO. “These new commonsense measures will help protect some of our most vulnerable patients and reduce the risk of spread to our health care workers.”

In addition to these new measures, everyone who currently enters any VASNHS facility is pre-screened. Since this lengthens entry times into the facility, patients are advised to allow extra time when arriving for their appointments.

Per CDC guidance and VA protocols, individuals known to be at risk for a COVID-19 infection are immediately isolated to prevent potential spread to others.

Veterans and staff are encouraged to take everyday preventive actions to avoid being exposed to the virus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are sick or becoming sick.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- If you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with symptoms, call the VA before going to the facility.

Veterans can also use virtual care options such as [Telehealth \[telehealth.va.gov\]](https://telehealth.va.gov) or [MyHealthVet Secure Messaging \[myhealth.va.gov\]](https://myhealth.va.gov). Care in the home via [VA Video Connect \[mobile.va.gov\]](https://va.videoconnect.mobi) is also available.

For more information about the Coronavirus, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> [cdc.gov].

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