

COVID-19 | Information for Veterans

Nevada’s veterans should be aware of changes to their health care and benefits as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Veteran Health Administration (VHA) addresses the COVID-19 outbreak. For more information on dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, download Senator Cortez Masto’s full resource guide at www.cortezmasto.senate.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions

Health

I have fever, cough, and shortness of breath – symptoms associated with COVID-19 (but it is NOT an emergency). What should I do?

If you believe you may have COVID-19, you should immediately call your local VA facility before seeking care in person. Veterans can also use telehealth services through My HealtheVet so a healthcare professional can assess your symptoms and provide a diagnosis without you coming in, which could put other patients or healthcare staff at risk. The VA also has options to connect with your healthcare provider via telephone.

I have a non-COVID-19 related health issue, and regularly see a healthcare provider for appointments. What should I do?

You should still call your provider or send a secure message through My HealtheVet. They can discuss your options for care in the immediate future. Veterans may be able to maintain all their non-emergency healthcare appointments via phone or telehealth. Some non-emergent medical procedures will have to be postponed. Your provider will help you determine what options are right for you.

How do I use telehealth services?

You can always send a secure message to your healthcare provider through My HealtheVet with questions about how telehealth can work for you. You can download [VA Video Connect](#) through the VA mobile app store to ensure the app is ready to go should you ever need telehealth assistance. You will need to coordinate virtual care with your health team prior to using VA Video Connect. To use VA Video Connect, you will need a device (smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer) with an internet connection and a camera. Veterans using VA Video Connect can do so with T-Mobile, Sprint, or Verizon without data charges. Under the CARES Act, the VA can partner with local telecommunications companies to subsidize or cover broadband access.

My loved one is currently a patient at a VA facility. Can I visit them?

In most cases, VA recommends postponing your visit to see a patient at a VA facility. VA is currently not permitting any outside visitors to nursing homes, and spinal cord injury and disorder centers due to concerns about the safety and health of residents and staff.

Benefits

I own a small business which has been affected by COVID-19. How can I get assistance?

Eligible 501(c)19 veterans organizations with fewer than 500 employees can receive support through the Small Business Paycheck Protection Program. This support includes coverage of eight weeks of your payroll, mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs, and 100 percent loan forgiveness options if you maintain your workers. For more information, please see my Small Business One-Pager.

I have a mortgage backed by the VA. Will my home be foreclosed?

With the enactment of the CARES Act, VA-insured mortgages (and all federally backed mortgages) are protected from foreclosure for 60 days past March 18, 2020. If you need more support, you can request a

forbearance for up to 6 months through your mortgage from your mortgage holder. In addition, on March 29, 2020, Governor Sisolak declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the State of Emergency is in effect, evictions and foreclosures processed after March 12, 2020 are prohibited in Nevada. For more information, please see my Renter and Mortgage One-Pager.

I am a student veteran whose classes are now online. Can I retain my housing allowance?

Yes, Senate Bill 3503, which I was a cosponsor of, was signed into law on March 21 and it requires that the VA still pay housing allowances at the on-campus rate if your school switched to online classes due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

What kinds of resources are being provided to the VA to prepare for and respond to COVID-19?

The CARES Act makes \$14.4 billion available to the VA for essential medical equipment, such as testing kits, and personal protective equipment (PPE).

I am a VA employee concerned about overtime pay during COVID-19. Will I receive pay for all my overtime hours? The CARES Act waives pay caps for VA staff working overtime, so you should be fully compensated for all hours served during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am a home health care worker serving veterans, but I don't have any personal protective equipment (PPE). What can I do?

Reach out to your local VA, because the CARES Act requires the VA to provide any necessary PPE to prevent the wearer from contracting COVID-19, to include gloves, N-95 masks, gowns, goggles, or face shields, to home health care workers serving veterans at home and in the community.

My family member is in either the Southern or Northern Nevada State Veterans Home – how will they be kept safe and healthy?

The CARES act allows for the VA to share personal protective equipment (PPE) with State Veterans Homes. These essential protective supplies will help safeguard our veterans in State Veterans Homes and the healthcare workers who serve them.