

NEWS RELEASE

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – March 11, 2020 | VISN 8 Office of Communication & Stakeholder Relations | VISN8CommunicationOffice@va.gov

VA Medical Facilities in Florida, South Georgia, and the Caribbean Taking Extra Precautions for COVID-19

ST. PETERSBURG, FL - While the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) still considers COVID-19 to be a low threat to the general American public, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands are taking extra precautions aimed at limiting COVID-19 exposure risk to Veterans, employees, volunteers and contractors.

Veterans who are concerned they may have symptoms of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), flu or cold **should contact the [VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center](#) at 1-877-741-3400 (toll free) before coming to a VA facility.** Clinical staff are available to provide 24/7 virtual care and support, including nurse advice and triage. This service is available at no cost to Veterans enrolled for care in VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8). VISN 8 facilities include all VA Medical Centers and clinics associated with the following healthcare systems:

- [Bay Pines VA Healthcare System](#)
- [James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and Clinics](#)
- [Miami VA Healthcare System](#)
- [North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System](#)
- [Orlando VA Healthcare System](#)
- [VA Caribbean Healthcare System](#)
- [West Palm Beach VA Medical Center](#)

Each of VISN 8's medical centers and outpatient clinics are also conducting mandatory screening protocols to rapidly identify individuals who may have symptoms of respiratory illness and direct them for further triage and treatment. Patients should plan to arrive at the medical facilities well in advance of their appointment time to comply with the screening process. For specific information about processes for each healthcare system, please visit the appropriate healthcare system website (linked above).

Additionally, access to VISN 8 Community Living Centers (VA nursing homes) and Spinal Cord Injury Units are now strictly monitored to protect patients deemed more vulnerable and higher risk. A temporary "no visitor" policy has been adopted for CLCs and SCI units specifically. This means no outside visitors will be permitted to see residents in these units. Learn more about VA's announcement [here](#).

Lastly, some VISN 8 facilities have cancelled special events and/or activities that include large gatherings. Cancellations of special events and other activities can be found on healthcare system websites.

Aside from the operational changes noted, all facilities remain fully operational. Veterans with scheduled appointments should plan to attend and complete appointments as they normally would while considering extra time needed for screening.

VISN 8 understands these actions may be inconvenient to some, however, these commonsense measures will help protect those who trust VA for their care and the employees that provide that care. For more information about COVID-19 visit [CDC coronavirus disease 2019](#).