VA Voluntary Service COVID-19 recommendations

The following recommendations are outlined as operational considerations for VAVS offices during such time as precautionary actions being put in place as part of VA's response to the current COVID-19 crisis.

1. Involve the Voluntary Service Officer as part of Incident Command Teams.
2. The current restrictions for Community Living Centers (CLCs) does not specifically identify 'volunteers' in the visitation limitations; however, Volunteer engagement should be restricted in these areas, as well.
3. Prepare a Continuity of Operations (COOP) for VAVS, to include identification of essential volunteer assignments based on strategic need.
   - Personally contact those volunteers considered essential and the parameters of the role (if change is necessary during this time).
      - Notify volunteers of required screening procedures upon entering the facility.
      - Consider the need for any periodic physical screening or personal query of the volunteer to monitor ongoing fitness for volunteer duty.
   - Personally contact those volunteers being asked to temporarily suspend their roles.
4. Compile contact lists of all volunteers to maintain periodic and routine communication (email/newsletters) during extended periods of absence, include CDC guidelines and approved VA fact sheets and communications relevant to volunteers. NOTE: All materials must be reviewed and approved through facility PAO, following facility-level clearance guidelines.

Additionally, materials should be sent to VHA Communications and VACO VAVS for awareness and document tracking. OPIA will be notified for awareness.

5. Postpone/reschedule large gatherings and events, including volunteer recognition banquets, diversional group activities within the facility and off-site recreation outings.
   - Identify current schedule of events through 30/60/90 days.
   - Notify organizations to cancel/reschedule activities.
6. Consider alternatives for VAVS Committee Meetings, including teleconferencing and SKYPE.
7. Suspend volunteer on-boarding to minimize new individuals entering the environment at this time.
   - Incorporate messaging on facility web page to notify potential volunteers to contact VAVS prior to visiting the facility to inquire about volunteer service.
8. VAVS, in collaboration with Recreation Therapy Service, should determine needs for leisure or recreation items for patients that may require use of General Post Funds or other resources, as available.
9. Consult VAVS VISN Liaison for additional guidance.
10. **The following specific guidance is recommended for the Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN) Program and drivers.**
    - Limit number of passengers to 4 to minimize close contact.
    - Daily, all scheduled passengers (Veterans/caregiver escorts) should be called prior to pick up with screening questions to ensure that they are currently asymptomatic. If Veteran/caregiver escort answers "yes" to any of the pre-screening questions, they will be asked to call their scheduled physician/provider and **will not be transported using VTN services**.

- Passengers will be notified that they may be subject to additional screening once they arrive at the facility.
- Drivers will be notified of changes in designated entries to the facility.
- Drivers will be required to disinfect surfaces between trips.
- Facility should ensure an adequate supply of disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, and masks.
- Consider routine check or observation of these drivers through employee health or other means to ensure their ongoing fitness for volunteer service given their frequent and high-volume contact with patients during this period.
- Fact Sheets and other approved COVID-19 materials for Veterans should be readily available in the vehicles, should questions arise about the current situation.
- Drivers are urged not to offer guidance or information related to VA's response to COVID-19.
- VAVS should monitor and maintain any concerns/issues that may arise during transports daily to assess any necessary changes, training, or communication to ensure safe operations of the VTN program.