

Date: MAR 23 2020

From: Veterans Health Administration Executive in Charge, Office of the Under Secretary for Health

Subj: Essential Health Care Operations Allowed to Continue During Shelter in Place

To: VHA Employees in Locations with Shelter in Place Orders

1. Multiple states, counties, and towns across the United States have issued similar orders that direct individuals to shelter at their place of residence except that they may leave to provide or receive certain essential services or engage in certain essential activities and work for essential business and government services.

2. The United State Attorney General issued a memo on March 20, 2020 alerting law enforcement that certain employees and contractors of the Federal Government are required to continue their duties in support of essential government operations. In the Veterans Health Administration, employees and contractors engaged in healthcare delivery and support are performing an essential government function, which provides a basis for exemption from shelter in place requirements. Further, failure to provide needed healthcare delivery and support could adversely affect the health, welfare and safety of the public. Providing for healthcare delivery and support is considered an essential governmental function and is necessary to ensure continuity of operations within the terms of the orders.

3. Employees need to work with their respective supervisors to discuss healthcare operational needs and the employees' specific role in continuing essential operations. It is imperative that we keep our employees safe while focusing on the need to support the mission of serving our Veterans, and the nation's healthcare system.

4. This information is being furnished to VHA employees and contractors because law enforcement professionals will likely be enforcing the shelter-in-place orders in some instances. For this reason, it is critical that employees **have their PIV badge and a copy of this memo when traveling to and from work** to verify the employee's standing as an essential government worker. Contractors should carry a copy of this memo and their identification.

5. Please see the following comprehensive resource site to assist supervisors and employees: <https://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/Worklife/Pandemic/> . Please contact the Office of Workforce Management & Consulting at [wmc@va.gov](mailto:wmc@va.gov) if you have any questions or need additional guidance.



Richard A. Stone, MD