



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

*Department of Behavioral Health and
Developmental Services*

MARY CLARE SMITH, MD
DIRECTOR

Jon Anderson, M.D.
Medical Director

WESTERN STATE HOSPITAL
BOX 2500
STAUNTON, VIRGINIA 24402-2500
(540) 332-8000 FAX # 332-8197
TDD 332-8002

March 14, 2020

Dear Family Members, Authorized Representatives, and/or Legal Guardians:

This letter is being sent to inform you regarding a change to the visitation policy at Western State Hospital. On March 12, 2020, Governor Northam declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the continued spread of novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. In response to this, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDS) is committed to taking proactive steps to keep individuals admitted to our state facilities and our staff as safe as possible. This letter will provide information about the effects the current nationwide novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak which have informed the need for this change.

Prevention of illness is the most effective way to address novel coronavirus and to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19, **Western State Hospital is restricting visitation starting today, March 14, 2020.** *Restricted means that visitors will not be allowed in the facility at all, except for contractors and vendors who are mission critical to the operations of the facility and lawyers representing a client currently admitted to the facility.*

This policy is being implemented by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to ensure that the critical services provided by the state facilities are maintained and able to provide a safe environment. The public health agencies, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Virginia Department of Health (VDH), are routinely referenced for the most accurate and up to date information about these infections.

The policy to restrict visitation due to COVID-19 is subject to change and this policy will be reviewed on a weekly basis. Please contact the hospital PRIOR to visiting for an updated status and information at this number: **540-332-8101**.

We want to remind you about some ways to help to protect you and your family from getting sick:

- ❖ Stay at home if you have symptoms
- ❖ If children are sick please do not send them to school
- ❖ Frequent handwashing with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand cleaner
- ❖ Use tissues to cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue in a wastebasket. If you do not have a tissue and need to cough or sneeze use your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- ❖ Stay at least 3-6 feet from someone who appears to be ill.
- ❖ Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth
- ❖ Get plenty of rest
- ❖ The symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild to severe and may appear 2-14 days after exposure.
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- ❖ Older adults and people with underlying chronic medical conditions seem to be at higher risk for more serious disease course with COVID-19
- ❖ Call your Doctor if you develop symptoms and have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19 OR have recently travelled from an area with widespread or community spread of COVID-19

We will inform you know when there is a change to this visitation policy and appreciate your understanding and support in making this decision to maintain the health and safety of the individuals in our care.

Sincerely,

Mary Clare Smith, MD
Hospital Director/CEO