

DAV Wisconsin Transportation Updates

Report for DAV Transportation – Southern Area

Milwaukee VA Medical Center

Everything is fine. We are not transporting as many veterans as before COVID but at least we are helping our Nation's veterans receive the health care they so need and deserve.

Thanks go to our volunteers: drivers, office workers, waiting room and outside coordinators. They have done a thankless task during this hard time the world is seeing.

We are thankful to the Milwaukee VA Medical Center for allowing our program to continue through these trying times. Milwaukee and surrounding areas follow the safety issues that are in place. Waiting room and office are sanitized throughout the day, vans are sanitized when starting, when veterans get in and out and at the end of the day. Vans and office/waiting room are subject to UV light treatments weekly. Masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer are in each van and are handed out to veterans as they get into the van.

Ford Motor Company donated thousands of masks and we have packaged them in bundles which contain 10 in a baggie for veterans to take home. This helps our veterans have a clean mask for at least a week and, if they need more, they can have more.

Milwaukee and surrounding areas are moving along as always. We have been allowed to recruit new drivers, but that is difficult during this time.

**WE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF VOLUNTEERS FOR THE RACINE/KENOSHA VAN!!!
DUE TO ILLNESSES WE HAVE LOST TWO DRIVERS LEAVING ONLY ONE!! PLEASE --
IF YOU LIVE IN THAT AREA AND CAN HELP OUT CALL PATTY AT 414-384-2000 EXT
45715.**

Madison VA Medical Center

In Madison, DAV transportation started running a few months ago. They have continued to serve veterans in the COVID era. Madison DAV can only transport one veteran per vehicle which follows the guidelines they developed. These

guidelines were reviewed and approved by the facility. They include seating, screening questions, cleaning, masks, sanitizing and on-board supply totes.

Recently it was brought to the attention of our Madison Hospital Service Coordinator (HSC) David Bradford that VA Employee Health is concerned about whether DAV drivers age 70 or over should be allowed to volunteer. The concern, by at least one member of the Hospital Senior Management Team, is whether DAV should be transporting veterans considering the recent COVID spike in the Dane County area. If Madison VA shuts our program down, there will be many veterans not able to receive the care they so need and deserve.

HSC Bradford and Paul Rickert, the Community Relations/Voluntary Service Chief, are working on a possible presentation to be given on how DAV has been handling the virus in our vans and office. We are very hopeful that this issue passes without restricting DAV services, because the hospital leadership has historically been incredibly supportive of our efforts.

In a positive development, at his request, Madison VA has begun processing new volunteer drivers again after stopping in March.

The DAV Transportation Network established in 1987 has saved the Department of Veterans Affairs millions of dollars a year. These dedicated volunteers have saved taxpayers nearly \$32 million dollars. Since the inception of the DAV Transportation Network, DAV departments and chapters, along with Ford Motor Company have donated 3,678 vehicles at a combined cost of more than \$84 million. DAV volunteer drivers dedicated more than 1.2 million hours of their time driving 20,513,512 miles and providing more than 615,000 rides.

Have a great holiday season

Patty Davis

Transportation Coordinator – Southern Region

Report for DAV Transportation – Northern Area

With one exception, the programs at Green Bay, Appleton, Shawano, and other facilities continue to operate, but at a limited capacity. This is based on the volunteers available to carry out the mission. Green Bay does not run to Milwaukee on Fridays until further notice.

Unfortunately, the Transportation Program at Tomah VA has not operated since March which has caused a disservice to the veterans in that area. Many veterans and even Tomah VA staff have questioned us as to why the Transportation Program is not operating. Sadly, we have not been able to give them a concrete answer.

Formulating the guidelines has been an issue along with a lack of transparency. Initially, each van was to contain a sanitation tote bag with thermometers so drivers could take a passenger temperature when they were picked up. After a delay of several months, the thermometers finally arrived. Still, the Program was not started with no explanation given to us.

Approval process for the guideline by the Tomah VA Administration has been excruciatingly slow. The goal posts keep moving. Recently, we found out through a third party, they are now waiting for Plexiglas sheets to be installed between the driver and passengers in each van.

The relationship between the DAV Transportation Network and a VHA (Veterans Health Administration) Medical Facility is described in VHA Handbook 1620.02 dated September 4, 2014:

- RESPONSIBILITIES 5.a. (2): *Appropriate HAS (Health Administration Service) and Voluntary Service personnel are to collaborate with the DAV HSC...in establishing local procedures to schedule transportation to meet the needs of the Veteran patient.* (page 3)

The lack of transparency has been extremely disappointing, especially since DAV has always been a strong supporter of Tomah VA during its good and troublesome times. Hopefully, this lack of transparency will soon be resolved.

Dick Marbes
Transportation Coordinator – Northern Region