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# News Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**October 20, 2009**

### **VA Black Hills Health Care System Limits Visitation and Non-Veteran Access to Medical Centers and All Outpatient Clinics**

In response to an increase in respiratory infections in our service area, including Influenza A (H1N1), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Black Hills Health Care System has established the following guidelines for the protection of, and the further prevention of influenza among our Veteran patients, their family members, staff and the general population within the communities we serve.

Effective immediately and in effect until further notice:

- On all **inpatient wards** at the Fort Meade and Hot Springs VA Medical Centers, including our Community Living Centers (CLC) and Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs (RRTP) visitors are limited to immediate family members ONLY and all visitors must be older than 18 years of age. Please do NOT visit when you are sick with symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, runny nose, fever and/or chills, body aches, headaches.
- For all **outpatient clinic appointments** within our Medical Center and our Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC), children under the age of 18 should NOT accompany Veterans to their appointments. If you are sick with symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, runny nose, fever and/or chills, body aches, headaches you will be asked to wear a mask.
- Volunteers 18 year of age or younger are asked not to report for their volunteer assignments at this time. Your supervisor will notify you when this restriction is lifted.

We understand these restrictions may be challenging however these limitations are necessary to ensure the healthiest possible environment for our Veterans. If you have questions or need more information about influenza please visit our website at

[www.blackhills.va.gov](http://www.blackhills.va.gov) or call the VISN 23 toll-free flu information line at 888-686-0479.

Further questions may be directed to Deborah Eiring, Public Affairs Specialist at 605-745-2031.

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