

Fort Belvoir COVID-19 Virtual Town Hall

April 23, 2020

Note: This is not a verbatim transcript. Some questions and responses are edited for clarity.
Video recap can be viewed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=556791738310179>

<https://home.army.mil/belvoir/index.php/about/covid-19>

Question: How is Fort Belvoir enforcing the face covering policy?

Col Michael Greenberg (Fort Belvoir Garrison Commander): The face covering policy is in effect in the Exchange, Commissary, Shoppettes, Post Office, Child Development Center, hospital, ID card facilities, food establishments and areas where you cannot maintain six feet separation. You will not be allowed in those facilities or to shop in those facilities unless you have to face coverings. Please cover both your nose and your mouth with a face covering. There are courtesy patrols helping enforce the standard. I ask that if they see you and they make a correction, please do not talk back to them. Acknowledge them, make the correction and move on. Again, this is not just for your safety, but this is for the safety of you and all those in the community. This is one of those additive measures that we can do across the installation to really prevent the spread of this virus.

Question: There are large gatherings in housing areas. How does the installation address that?

Col Michael Greenberg: We have some courtesy patrols in various facilities and on the installation. If you have an issue in the housing areas or on the installation, you can always contact the Department of Emergency Services non-emergency phone number (703-806-4277). If you see something, say something you can also help by talking to others in your community. I ask that parents take responsibility for their children and help us enforce the installation policies for the safety of our entire community.

Question: My COVID-19 test came back negative, so why do I have to continue to quarantine or wear a mask?

Capt. Cynthia Judy (Director, Fort Belvoir Community Hospital): If you test negative for COVID, you probably were not infected at the time your nasal swab specimen was collected, so we cannot be 100% sure. The negative test does not always mean that a person is not infected with a virus. In fact, if somebody is tested really early when they have the virus, it may not come back positive. Or if there just wasn't a good specimen in that swab, then they might come back negative and that would be a false negative. So someone could test positive later or the patient could be exposed after the test and develop the illness with a negative test providing sort of a false sense of security. It's important that we complete quarantine periods, continue to practice social distancing, hand washing, and wearing of those cloth face coverings in accordance with CDC guidance.

Question: The next question, there's a lot of information in the media regarding antibody treatment for COVID-19. Is that available at Fort Belvoir?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: The Armed Services blood program is currently looking for people who have fully recovered from COVID-19 to give convalescent plasma for seriously ill Coronavirus patients. Convalescent plasma is the liquid part of the blood that's collected from patients who have fully recovered from the infection antibodies present in convalescent plasma are proteins that might help in the fight against Coronavirus. While there's no approved treatment for this disease at this time, there is information that suggests it might help some patients recover from COVID-19. To be eligible to donate, you have to be at least 17 years old and weigh at least 110 pounds, be in good health and feeling well have a prior diagnosis of COVID-19. That meets specific lab criteria with a positive test, and then be symptom free for at least 14 days prior to donation. This is an armed services blood program research protocol in conjunction with Walter Reed. Visit the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital web site for more information on COVID testing, pharmacy and other services. Website: tricare.mil/mtf/BelvoirHospital

Question: Does Fort Belvoir Community Hospital provide COVID antibody testing.

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Not yet but we hope to in the future. Experts across the nation are working hard to validate the tests that are currently available. But they're only available through research protocols. None of them have been approved by the FDA yet.

Question: Is the PX pharmacy still open?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Yes, the PX pharmacy is still processing electronic prescriptions from civilian providers, as well as refills. They'll also fill new prescriptions that have been activated through the online secure messaging site. Those opportunities on how to activate a prescription and you can still go to the Fort Belvoir Community Hospital web page to see all of the opportunities to do that. Website: <https://tricare.mil/mtf/BelvoirHospital>.

Question: If my prescription was processed to be picked up at the PX pharmacy, can it still be picked up there?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: The PX pharmacy is still open and we did not move all those prescriptions over to the drive thru process. They still remain available over the PX which I believe patients, the feedback that I get is that patients really like that because they can go to the commissary, and then go by the PX and pick up those prescriptions. I will tell you that the first thing in the morning continues to be the busiest time of day. It's better to wait a little bit later in the morning so that you're not waiting with the whole group that are trying to get there right at opening.

Question: Has labor and delivery been asked to minimize staff going in and out of rooms?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Yes, when it's safe to minimize people going in the room, we will do so. But we do not want to sacrifice safety just for the comfort of not wanting to wear a mask when the staff are in the room. We want to make sure that our patients are safe.

Question: Are there any online trainings or classes for first time moms?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Instead of all of those group classes, we are doing individual classes. We're in the process of producing videos and virtual training for future use, but those are still in development.

Question: Are there confirmed cases of COVID on post?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Yes, but what I can tell you since I can't give out the numbers is that we remain consistent with what you're seeing in the local communities. Our numbers aren't any higher or any lower than what is in the local communities. Fort Belvoir numbers are included as part of the local health department and CDC numbers.

Question: If a patient tests positive for COVID-19 and works on the installation, are they required to receive a negative result after quarantine before returning to work?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: There are two ways that we actually release people from quarantine or have them returned to work. One is a test-based methodology and one is a time-based methodology. The majority of people will discontinue quarantine using the time-based method. It's the standard.

Time-based method of ending quarantine

They have to meet three criteria in order to be released. It has to have been three days since they had a fever. That means fever free for three days without taking any Tylenol or Motrin or any kind of medications that would reduce their fever. Their symptoms have to have improved for example no cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, or anything like that. Then it has to have been at least seven days since the onset of symptoms. If they meet those three criteria, then they can be released from quarantine and returned to work.

If a person didn't have any symptoms, they were an asymptomatic patient who tested positive because they were exposed to somebody with COVID, then they must 10 days since the positive test.

Test-based method of ending quarantine

The test-based method for returning people to work is that they still need to meet the other three criteria--be fever free for at least three days, and have no other symptoms such as cough, difficulty breathing, or shortness of breath; and have two tests that were negative within 24 hours of one another.

There are some communities, some commands based on whatever the duties are, or whatever the work environment may be, where some people would be required to have that test-based methodology. But the majority of them are going to be that time based methodology.

Question: Are there any updates on the Child Development Centers?

Col Michael Greenberg: Currently, the Child Development Centers are only accepting the children of vital employees, which is a step above the mission essential employees. We will keep everyone informed regarding any changes to our ability to accept more children.

Question: When will barbershops open?

Col Michael Greenberg: I understand the concerns about the barbershops. We are looking at that and I will give you more information over the next one or two town halls.

Question: Why do I have to take my mask or my glasses off for the temperature screenings?

Col. Michael Greenberg: This is the only way to effectively get a core temperature reading.

Question: How do families register for school?

Ms. Jamie Albers (Fort Belvoir School Liaison Officer): Families are able to contact the school in order to register remotely, even though schools are closed. So families will need to contact the school registrar and then the student will be added to the student information system and then at that time, students can start registering for classes for next year. Once the buildings are reopened, the parents with the student will have to go to the school to sign all paperwork to finish registration.

Question: I would like to homeschool my children, what steps do I need to take?

Ms. Jamie Albers: For homeschooling families on Fort Belvoir, or choosing to homeschool, you will have to file with the Fairfax County Public Schools. The Fort Belvoir School Liaison Office can provide you with that documents and also can provide you with the information and contact of the department you will need to send that paperwork to. We also support with homeschool through the Virginia Department of Education resources, and we can connect you with those as well.

Question: What education resources are available for students?

Ms. Jamie Albers: There are a wide range of resources available but a little known tutoring service is a one of the best resources to help our children while they are in the virtual classroom environment. Tutor.com which is a 24 hour seven day a week online tutoring service. The Department of Defense has temporarily expanded eligibility for tutor.com. It's now available at no cost for any adult or child in a DoD civilian or active duty National Guard Reserve or wounded warrior military families who are trying to continue learning while managing unexpected changes to their routines. We also have another great resource for those families who have children that are getting ready to take their AP exams. The College Board has online teachers, AP teachers that can help tutor your child in preparing them to take the AP exam, they have live or they have recorded sessions that can help students.

Question: How do we contact the Fort Belvoir School Liaison Officer?

Ms. Jamie Albers: My number is 703-805-3436. Again, that's 703-805-3436.

Question: Can you change the Pence gates flashing sign to say "Visitors go to Tulley Gate"

Mr. Frank Hentschel (Director, Department of Emergency Services): Yes. Great idea. We've already done it. Thank you for the recommendation.

Question. Tulley gate is terrible at night. Can there be more lighting or adequate lights?

Mr. Frank Hentschel: We conducted a lighting survey at the Tulley gate area. The public road leading up to Tulley Gate area is a low light area because it is adjacent to the academic wildlife refuge. Additionally, after the survey, we made some lighting adjustments and we will continue to make some safety improvements.

Question: How do you enforce social distancing on people that live in housing?

Mr. Frank Hentschel: As the garrison commander mentioned, if you see something, say something. Second of all, fortunately, we've not had to use law enforcement for social distancing. We ask that you continue to adhere to the Garrison policies and CDC guidance on social distancing.

Question: The telephone number at the visitor center is always busy. I need to know if they're still allowing moving vans to come on base for my civilian move out.

Mr. Frank Hentschel: Moving vans are allowed on the installation. They must come through the Tulley gate entrance commercial visitor lane to be processed.

Question: Can you please show the Commissary workers how to wear their face coverings?

Col. Michael Greenberg: We're asking our supervisors across the commissary and other agencies to give the employees time to take the mask off and give their face a minute to breathe. If you if you were the mass and I know many have gone into the concert or just done some shopping and you keep the mass the face coverage on for about an hour to you know how it feels. And so again, that's how we are going to try to help out with enforcing those, that standard.

Question: How many people are allowed in the commissary at one time?

Col. Michael Greenberg: I'm not going to give an exact number. I will say we are limiting access. The morning hours are busier than the afternoon hours. We do have monitors going into the commissary along with the store managers to make sure that we are not letting in too many people.

Question: What is the timeline for Soldiers who have a report date to receive orders after the stop movement ends?

Mr. Kevin Rennick (Director, Fort Belvoir Human Resources): Orders are being pushed out daily. I ask that all soldiers coordinate with unit S-1 G-1, or administrative coordinator. We are corresponding via email and telephone to assure that all soldier actions and orders are being disseminated accordingly.

Question: How do we get information on household shipments?

Mr. Kevin Rennick: Please reach out to the local joint personnel property shipping office. They are the subject matter expert on all transportation and household good movements. Website: installations.militaryonesource.mil/military-installation/fort-belvoir/moving/household-goods

Question: Any thoughts about reopening the golf course or outdoor areas with social distancing requirements?

Col Michael Greenberg: Yes, we are reviewing social distancing requirements as it relates to activities on the installation. No decisions have been made as of yet.

Question: Can we go for a run without a mask as long as we're able to make six to eight feet away from others?

Col Michael Greenberg: The answer is yes, if you can maintain the distances there are no issues.

Question: Are children under the age of 16 required to show their ID when entering post.

Mr. Frank Hentschel: Children 16 and older need to show ID.

Question: Are people with autoimmune diseases still able to refill prescriptions for hydroxychloroquine at the pharmacy?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Yes, we have plenty to continue to refill those prescriptions as needed for people who were already taking that.

Question: How do we get hospital pharmacy refills prescriptions?

Capt. Cynthia Judy: Whether you get refills at the PX pharmacy or at the main pharmacy, with the drive up service right now, if somebody wants to refill a prescription, they can do that by activating it first or doing the drive up on the first deck and then the pickup on the second deck.