

**Author:** Tyler Talley**Date:** 11/20/2020**ODVA reports new outbreak at Clinton vet center**

(eCap) The Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) confirmed a new coronavirus outbreak Friday at one of its centers, marking the third substantial outbreak at one of its centers since the onset of the pandemic.

ODVA Director of State Veterans Homes Shawn Kirkland confirmed the outbreak at the Clinton Veterans Center, which began on Oct. 19, currently totaled with 37 active positive COVID-19 cases among residents and one death.

"Twenty of those are in-house and the rest are at the (local) VA hospital," Kirkland noted.

ODVA also aimed to begin moving an unconfirmed number of active COVID residents from the VA hospital in Clinton to the dedicated COVID-wing at the Norman Veterans Center on Friday. The situation was "fluid," according to Kirkland.

"It's like a military operation. If one battalion's got resources that another battalion needs to win the fight, you move it over," ODVA Executive Director Joel Kintsel elaborated. "We do treat our seven centers as a system and on occasion people are moved between the centers and in other instances the VA hospital. All those moving parts work together."

Kirkland added later those residents moved to Norman would not be comingled with the other residents there to prevent potential exposure and spread.

Clinton's outbreak is the latest in a trio of major coronavirus outbreaks at state veterans centers, which includes the centers in both Claremore and Norman. Both of those outbreaks, which began in July and September respectively, have since calmed but claimed the lives of almost 70 residents combined.

As of Friday, the Claremore Veterans Center housed one COVID-positive patient, whereas the center in Norman has seven active cases. In relation to ODVA staff, 61 employees are out having tested positive and a "whole lot more than that" who are quarantining due to exposure or potential exposure, per Kirkland.

"That's improved pretty dramatically over the last couple of weeks," Kirkland said. "It was much worse than that."

**Tracked Bills Related To Story:** None

**News Stories (11/20/2020)**  
**For November 20, 2020****Author:** Sidney Lee**Date:** 11/20/2020**ABLE Commission prepares for the next year**

(eCap) The Oklahoma Alcoholic Beverage Law Enforcement (ABLE) Commission welcomed a new commissioner during its November board meeting. Matthew Cook will serve as a member of the ABLE Commission as he goes through the process of having his nomination approved by the Senate.

ABLE Executive Director Keith Burt said the commission will now have three currently practicing attorneys. Cook is also a certified CPA and Burt believes his experience in finance will also be a great asset to the board.

The commissioners were updated on the ABLE Commission's push to increase the work-from-home capabilities of their employees. Burt told the commissioners certain employees are spending roughly 80 percent of their time at home while others, like their cashiers and receptionists, are still working full-time in the office.

Both the ABLE Commission headquarters and employees working from home were negatively impacted by the ice storm. The main office was without power for three days with some employees coming in just to greet customers and tell them the office was closed.

Burt said everyone who came to the office was understanding and those concerned about their licenses expiring were reassured they would not be penalized.

Some employees who had been working at home for safety reasons were without power in their homes for up to a week. ABLE staff shifted their work hours so their co-workers could safely come into the office while they were without power and internet in their own homes.

ABLE Deputy Director Steven Barker updated the commissioners about the emergency rulemaking process to make the rules allowing curbside pick-up to become permanent. Public comment is currently open on the rules, but Burt pointed out that unlike previously passed emergency rules, curbside pick-up has been largely non-controversial and even appreciated so he does not think there will be much negative feedback.

ABLE Captain Erik Smoot told the commissioners they are working on new operations for compliance checks on curbside pick-up. The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services has contracted with ABLE to support these efforts in the state's four most populous counties with federal grant money.

One of hurdles ABLE needed to overcome was where to have the alcohol delivered. Smoot said they did not want inspections to happen at people's homes when someone could possibly come back and harass the resident if they were ticketed. Instead, ABLE has established working agreements with hotels and apartment complexes.

**Tracked Bills Related To Story:** None