NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 13, 2020

Alabama State Veterans Homes Issue Visitation Policy

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) is announcing a change to its visitation policy at the state's four veterans homes as a precautionary measure to COVID-19. The new policy temporarily restricts routine visitations to those four facilities. Routine visits by non-employees, to include work conducted by volunteers, have been temporarily halted at the four homes.

At present, entry into the homes by anyone other than employees is restricted to medically-necessary visits by outside healthcare personnel and/or visits by family members to terminally ill residents in their final days. Even in those two limited categories of visitations, all visitors will be carefully screened via written questionnaires and, if necessary, relevant physical examinations to ensure there is no risk of infecting residents. Before implementing the policy change, ADVA first notified its residents, their family members, and employees.

"Given that residents of the homes are at a higher risk of both contracting the virus and suffering more severe symptoms upon infection, we are implementing the restricted visitation policy in the best interest of the residents' health and well-being," said ADVA Commissioner Kent Davis. "This increased level of precaution has not been entered into lightly, and we will continue to communicate directly

with our residents and families that may be negatively impacted by the restrictions."

Davis added that the homes have the capability to assist residents with communicating with their family members through social media platforms and electronic communications such as Facebook, Facetime, and Skype.

The state veterans homes are working with local, state and federal agencies in a coordinated effort to protect veterans, families and staff from exposure to COVID-19. The ADVA is following the state's COVID-19 preparations protocol and is actively responding to the updated guidance provided from the Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and other federal and state agencies.

ADVA manages four veterans homes in Alexander City, Bay Minette, Huntsville and Pell City with a population of more than 700 veterans.

Information about ADVA's veterans homes visitation policy and other precautionary measures the department is taking in its response to the COVID-19 crisis is posted to the department's website at www.va.alabama.gov.

-30-