



TO: Chair Erin Murphy and Chair Jerry Newton
FROM: MDVA Commissioner Larry Herke
SUBJ: Response to Hastings Veterans Home Employee Feedback
DATE: March 19, 2023

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) takes seriously the feedback and allegations by former and current employees of the Hastings Veterans Home. MDVA leaders and Human Resources staff have worked closely with Hastings Veterans Homes employees to listen and respond to their feedback.

I have decided to go in a different direction with the Home's leadership. The last day for **Deputy Commissioner Douglas Hughes** and **Hastings Veterans Home Administrator Mike Anderson** was March 18, 2023. MDVA thanks them for their service.

We will be moving forward with new leadership at the Hastings Veterans Home, and we are looking forward to continuing to make positive changes in the service of our Veterans.

MDVA has initiated a search to fill both positions. Current Programs & Services Deputy Commissioner **Brad Lindsay** has transitioned to the Interim Deputy Commissioner of Healthcare. **Craig Smith**, a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator who has served as Interim Administrator at several Minnesota Veterans Homes in the past, has assumed the interim role of Hastings Veterans Home Administrator effective today.

As we move forward, we are committed to providing both excellent care to our Veteran Residents and a positive work environment for our staff.

While staffing during the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for all healthcare providers, we have retained most of our employees throughout this period. The Hastings Veterans Home, with 87 full-time equivalents, has a 7% vacancy rate, the best among our Veterans Homes.

And in January, we conducted a Customer Experience survey of the Hastings Home Residents. The survey included 17 quality indicators covering everything from "Overall Care" and "Nursing Care" to "Quality of Food" and "Laundry Service" and the results show an average rating of 4.4 out of 5.

Our last VA survey found no issues related to staffing levels nor lack of specialized staffing. We value our employees and have increased educational offerings, provided a Listening and Engagement Session through our Employee Assistance Program, offered many employee engagement opportunities and professional development for managers, and launched an employee retention committee.

We are expanding our efforts. For example:

- On Tuesday, a Human Resources Director and I will host a listening session with employees.
- We will be rolling out action items based on recommendations from the employee retention committee.
- We will continue to provide educational offerings for all staff.
- We are increasing the presence of our Human Resources team.

Because of data privacy laws and to respect the privacy of our former and current staff, we are unable to comment on specific employee allegations. We will continue to work through these matters individually.

Please let me know if I can answer any questions.

Thank you for your support of Minnesota Veterans and their families.