

Announcing COVID-19 Positive Tests



Background

As the coronavirus continues to unfold, hospitals and health systems are working hard to develop, execute and adjust their communications plans. The Kansas Hospital Association, in corporation with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, wants hospitals to communicate effectively when you have a confirmed positive COVID-19 case. We hope this resource will serve as a source of support for your communications needs.

Guidance

Work With Public Health - The local health department will notify a hospital if they have a confirmed positive COVID-19 case. Hospitals that have not yet had a positive case, should proactively reach out to their local health department to discuss this process. It is the decision of each hospital as to how they notify staff and the public about a confirmed positive COVID-19 case. KDHE recommends that hospitals establish protocol and set clear guidelines for communication of a confirmed positive case among staff members and the public, if they have not already. KDHE also follows “clusters” closely. If a hospital suspects they might have two or more positive cases resulting from one known exposure, please notify your local health department or KDHE EPI staff immediately for investigation at (877) 427-7317.

Establish Internal Communications - In an effort to keep staff informed and empowered to perform their jobs safely and effectively during this crisis, mobilize an internal communications strategy to create a source of truth for all employees. It is important to use a variety of tactics to educate, inform and reassure internal audiences about COVID-19. Communicate with the following internal audiences: leadership, managers, trustees, clinicians and all staff at all levels.

Establish External Communications - Communications reassurance and expert advice is critically necessary to deliver to external audiences. Leveraging local media, social media channels and posters/fliers take a multidimensional approach to spreading the word about COVID-19 preparedness. Focus on positioning your hospital as a trusted resource that cares deeply about its community. The communications plan should include a number of tactics to employ engagement in the external audiences such as patients, the public, at risk community members, media, elected leaders, community partners, churches and other organizations.

Communication Goals

- Ensure that employees, patients and the community feel that your hospital is a safe place for care.
- Make certain that staff feel protected and prepared.
- Inform staff daily of status, changing policies, how appreciated they are and that they are safe at work.
- Share critical COVID-19 prevention information with the community.
- Combat the spread of misinformation with reassuring, factual, evidence-based, expert information through as many channels as possible.

Talking Points

- Patient health and safety is our first and foremost priority.
- As the COVID-19 outbreak evolves, we know our community is increasingly concerned whether and how the virus is spreading.
- That's why we are working closely with our federal, state and local partners to respond to this challenge, update contingency plans and staying informed with the most up-to-date information.
- No matter what illness we are treating, we have all the necessary precautions in place to ensure patient safety.
- Our hospital cares deeply about the health and well-being of the community.
- Our hospital is leveraging expertise in the use of technology to deliver care safely.
- Hospital staff are showing up every day and providing care through an unprecedented pandemic. We have never been prouder of our staff.
- Our hospital is in constant communication with the local health department in regards to exposures.
- Our environmental services team is thoroughly cleaning all areas of our health system and following guidance set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the local county health department.
- Our staff members are monitoring their symptoms and staying home when sick to prevent any possible spread to other team members and patients.
- Community members must follow the social distancing orders and stay at home orders in place to slow the spread of the virus in our communities.
- Kansans have a vital role in this environment. It is critically important they use the health care system appropriately, take proper precautions and practice social distancing to ensure hospital resources are available for those who need them.
- Social isolation and distancing will help reduce the spread of the virus and limit the exposure of vulnerable individuals. Reduced spread allows hospitals to manage health care resources in our communities. The public has an important role in helping reduce the spread of the virus.
- It takes everyone doing his or her part to stop the spread of COVID-19. Patients should call before they seek medical attention for non-emergencies. This allows our teams to wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and prevents the spread to our team members.

