



TO: LOCAL NEWS MEDIA

FROM: SALINE COUNTY, SALINE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT, SALINE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND THE CITY OF SALINA

DATE: March 19th, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

As of today, March 19th, 2020, Saline County has not had any confirmed positive cases of COVID-19. When a positive case is identified in Saline County, the Saline County Health Department will be the only official source to release that information.

Our agencies have received numerous comments and questions as it relates to testing for COVID-19. The Saline County Health Department Clinical Coordinator provided additional information that hopefully helps explain the testing a bit further.

Why are there no tests being done for people who do not have symptoms (asymptomatic)?

- We CAN NOT overwhelm the healthcare system, such as ER and health clinics as they need to be able to care for those that are sick.
- We CAN NOT overwhelm the laboratories with thousands of tests which would significantly delay diagnosing those that are infected.
- Having a negative test today DOES NOT ensure that you will not be exposed and not be able to be infected at a later date.
- All the supplies that are needed to appropriately protect medical personnel are extremely limited at this time.
- All of the supplies that are necessary to run the tests are in short supply.
- There is no conclusive evidence as to when a test would be positive in a person that is not showing any signs or symptoms.
- There is no treatment and care would be managed the same at home unless someone was sick enough that would warrant hospitalization.
- KDHE's Dr. Norman has stated several times "We do not test people who are well (asymptomatic)."

The good news is that yesterday, KDHE announced that private labs are able to perform the tests for COVID-19. This should assist in the number of tests that can be processed daily. The number of tests that are being performed in each county or the number of negative results is not a statistic that is tracked by KDHE or by the private labs.

To say that this situation is changing rapidly would be an understatement. The new information that our agencies received through our State and Federal partners is as follows:

- U.S. Congress passed a bill that would provide the testing for free, including those who are uninsured and the expansion of food aid and unemployment dollars to States.
- KDHE has expanded its hotline that is open to the public to call for general questions on COVID-19. 866-534-3463 is available seven days a week with extended hours.
- The Kansas State Department of Education continues to work with the School Districts on guidance for continued learning. Your local school district will be communicating with further information with parents.

Guidance and information are constantly being updated by KDHE. Please visit their site to see the most current information: <https://govstatus.egov.com/coronavirus>

We cannot stress enough the importance of preventing the spread of diseases by:

- Staying at home if you are sick.
- Washing your hands.
- Covering your sneezes and coughs.
- If you have concerns about your health condition, please call your healthcare provider.

As stated before, this is a rapidly changing situation. Our local government leaders are working hard and are making difficult decisions as it relates to the best interests of the health and safety of our citizens and employees. Additional press releases will be issued from our individual agencies and shared through our social media channels for any additional cancellations, closures, or modified services.

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