



TO: LOCAL NEWS MEDIA

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

DATE: March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

As of 5 pm, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 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 were informed today of updated guidance from KDHE on testing for COVID-19. In their release, starting Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> they are implementing priorities for testing. Due to the widescale shortages of laboratory supplies, testing of COVID-19 that is done at the KDHE lab will be prioritized for specific Kansas patients under investigation. KDHE stated that all other specimens that don't meet their criteria will not be tested. The testing priorities are set out as such:

- Testing for healthcare workers and first responders who have COVID-19 symptoms.
- Testing for potential clusters of unknown respiratory illness, with priority given to long-term care facilities and healthcare facilities.
- Testing of hospitalized patients with no alternative diagnosis.
- Testing of individuals over the age of 60 who have symptoms of COVID-19 with priority given to people who reside in a nursing home, long-term care facility, or other congregate settings.
- Testing individuals with underlying health conditions that would be treated differently if they were infected with COVID-19.

Any tests that were sent to the KDHE labs prior to March 23<sup>rd</sup>, will still be tested. KDHE directed healthcare providers to inform patients who present with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (those with a measured fever of 100.4 (F) or greater and lower respiratory symptoms including cough or shortness of breath) and who are not a high priority for testing, should self-isolate at home or another appropriate location until after resolution of fever and significant

improvement in symptoms. This self-isolation could be necessary for 14 days.

Testing swabs are in very short supply across Kansas and the United States. People have been tested in Saline County, but all results have been negative so far. This is not to say that there isn't a potential positive case in our community. Our agencies are well aware of that potential and can only hope that if a person in our community believes they are positive for COVID-19 that they are self-isolated, monitoring their symptoms and communicating with their healthcare provider.

We need everyone to understand that well people will not be tested. A well person's results will be negative. We cannot overwhelm the healthcare system, such as the ER and health clinics as they need to be able to care for those that are the sickest. We cannot overwhelm the laboratories with thousands of tests which would significantly delay diagnosing those that are infected. And most importantly, a negative test today does not ensure that you will not be exposed and not be able to be infected later. If travel is not necessary, please stay at home.

This situation continues to change rapidly with the number of cases of COVID-19 in Kansas that is growing each day. Governor Kelly signed two Executive Orders and additional guidance documents were released:

- Executive Order 20-08 temporarily expands telemedicine allowing for physicians to see patients virtually.
- Executive Order 20-09 provides temporary relief from some motor carrier rules.
- Guidance for workers who visit homes.
- Guidance for supporting families in accessing safe and healthy child care.

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.

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