For Immediate Release

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Local Health Agency Joint Response to COVID-19

Junction City, KS- Geary Community Hospital (GCH) and Konza Prairie Community Health Center (Konza) have joined forces to coordinate response efforts regarding COVID-19, a global and in cases, deadly virus spreading rapidly across the globe. As the two largest healthcare providers in Geary County, serving thousands of patients throughout the region, public health safety is the top priority for both organizations. The safety of staff, patients, and others who must access GCH and Konza facilities is paramount.

Geary Community Hospital has operationalized its emergency/crisis plan during the COVID-19 outbreak. GCH is adhering to State and federal guidelines for testing and treating the public. Implementing onerous restrictions is required to safeguard public health. Effective 3/16/20, the following measures will be instituted until the outbreak has ceased:

1. GCH will restrict access to the Hospital for patients, visitors, employees, and clinical personnel. Only the Emergency Room doors will be available.
2. There will be a formal check-in and check-out process for everyone utilizing the Emergency Room door, including the use of visitor badges. If a patient or visitor does not have a badge, they will be escorted out of the buildings immediately.
3. Patients are limited to one companion—no exceptions during this time.
4. Loitering, social visits, and public access to the cafeteria will not be allowed during this time.
5. Every non-staff person must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms upon entering the hospital—no exceptions.
6. All vendors and contractors must access through the same point of entrance/exit in the Emergency Room, unless other plans have been approved by authorized GCH personnel.
7. Security personnel will be enhanced during this time in order to protect citizens’ safety and to assist in enforcing these temporary rules.

Konza has also operationalized its emergency/crisis plan and will make every effort to support measures implemented by GCH to mitigate the local impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Effective immediately, Konza will implement the following measures until the COVID-19 outbreak ceases:
1. Konza will inform patients of newly implemented local measures- providing accurate and timely information to patients and families. Konza Patients with signs and symptoms will be instructed not to present at the hospital or other health agency prior to calling their Primary Care Provider.
2. Konza will coordinate testing of Persons Under Investigation with GCH staff, based on state and federal guidelines.
3. Every non-staff person must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms upon entering the facility- no exceptions.
4. Facemasks will be required for patients who are sick.
5. Staff who are sick will not be allowed to work.
6. Reducing non-essential staff travel.
7. Non-essential vendor and contractor access will be limited.

Currently, both agencies ask that if you have the following symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, please call ahead to your provider, wherever you access care, so they can provide instructions of next steps and be prepared for your arrival. Local instructions for patients who believe they are potentially infected with COVID-19 will be available to the public very soon. Screening may include drive-through services near the Surgery Center portico at the front, telehealth appointments, and other remote options for accessing health care services during this time, with the intent to limit exposure and transmission of the disease.

The COVID-19 outbreak is a rapidly evolving situation, there is no vaccine to prevent the disease. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus. The virus is thought to be spread mainly from person-to-person contact, between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet). There are many actions you can take to protect yourself and your family.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick, and keep your children at home when they are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

**NIETHER KONZA NOR GCH WILL BE ABLE TO DISTRIBUTE MASKS OR SIMILAR SUPPLIES TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC DUE TO AN EXTREME GLOBAL SHORTAGE. ONLY CLINICAL PROVIDERS WILL OFFER SUCH IN THE EVENT IT IS MEDICALLY NECESSARY FOR A PATIENT.**

Visit the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Coronavirus website for up-to-date information ([http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/#undefined](http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/#undefined)).