

Coalition Continuing COVID-19 Response for Buffalo County Residents

(April 22, 2020) Members of the Buffalo County Healthcare Coalition continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic at a local level.

Alternate Care Site

The University of Nebraska at Kearney has worked with the National Guard to prepare two residence halls to serve as an alternative care site when needed. DHHS has not yet opened UNK as an alternate care site, but it is hopeful they will be doing so soon.

Jeremy Eschliman, Health Director at Two Rivers Public Health Department, said during last week's meeting that the state was currently focused on operationalizing the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

Eschliman said the site will be utilized for quarantine of the public with diagnosed COVID-19 who wish to isolate away from their family members and/or may need regular check-ins. The site would not be used to provide acute care. Currently, capacity for COVID-19 is not an issue for the county's two hospitals.

Community Support & Response

The coalition also discussed other community updates and areas of assistance. The first was continued prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in assisted and independent living facilities.

Dr. Robert Messbarger, physician at Family Practice Associates and the City's Chief Medical Officer, said the City of Kearney has reached out to all organizations and reviewed their approaches to COVID-19. Messbarger felt most facilities were set up to manage patient care, address staffing plans, and had marginal PPE. He stressed the importance of assisting these facilities to keep pressure off the hospitals. Members of the coalition agreed to continue to provide support to the City in these efforts.

The group also discussed ways to provide more communications about COVID-19 in Spanish.

Buffalo County Community Partners has pulled together staff to work directly with the Spanish-speaking community and provide information about how to be screened for COVID-19 and find appropriate medical care. The group recommended utilizing the state COVID-19 hotline: (402) 552-6645 which is staffed 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week for information or calling any of the area clinics or hospitals for an appointment. Presentation to the ER for non-emergent medical needs is not recommended.

Kearney Regional Medical Center, CHI Good Samaritan and Family Practice Associates all have bi-lingual staff, utilize the Language Line, and have options for non-insured patients.

Two Rivers Public Health Department continues to assist healthcare facilities in the seven-county district to secure PPE. Most facilities feel good about their PPE supply. Some have even passed along extras to those in need. Darrin Lewis, Buffalo County Emergency Manager, expressed thanks for organizations and donors that had recently supplied surgical masks and face shields to the Buffalo County Sheriff's office.

The group will continue to meet regularly and plans to share regular updates and resources through the Buffalo County Community Partners: bcchp.org/covid19 and [facebook.com/bcchp](https://www.facebook.com/bcchp).

Members of the coalition include: CHI Health Good Samaritan, Children's Physicians-Kearney, Family Practice Associates, First Care Medical, Heartland Surgery Center, Kearney Regional Medical Center, New West Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery, Platte Valley Medical Clinic, Buffalo County Community Partners, Buffalo County Emergency Management, Tri-Cities Medical Response System (TRIMRS), Two Rivers Public Health Department, University of Nebraska-Kearney, Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral & Cremation Services, and O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home.

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