## **Buffalo County Healthcare Coalition Addresses Key Areas for Community-Wide COVID-19 Response**

*(April 9, 2020)* Buffalo County healthcare providers continue to work together to plan for a community-wide response to COVID-19.

During the most recent meeting of the coalition, the group discussed two key areas: a community-wide alternate care site and healthcare worker access to PPE (personal protective equipment).

**Alternate Care Site – University of Nebraska-Kearney**

An alternate care site is being planned at the University of Nebraska-Kearney with primary coordination of the effort now being done by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

This alternate site could be used in the event of a patient surge that would put both Kearney hospitals over their maximum capacity. Said Todd Gottula, Senior Director of Communications and Marketing at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, “UNK is working with the Nebraska National Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Kearney-area hospitals to prepare campus residence halls for use if beds at health care facilities are at capacity or otherwise unavailable.”

If hospital capacity is not an issue, the site could also be used to house members of the public needing to quarantine/isolate away from their family members.

**Healthcare Worker Access to PPE**

Most healthcare facilities in the area have begun to mask all patient-facing employees with surgical masks and are practicing extended-wear use of those masks.

Staff conducting aerosol-generating procedures wear N-95 respirators or other higher level of CDC-approved PPE. CHI Good Samaritan is in the process of beginning to reprocess N-95 respirators using a UV Light Tower. Similarly, Kearney Regional Medical Center is using an extended rotation protocol from Nebraska DHHS to extend the life of their N-95s.

Two Rivers Health Department is in the process of distributing the state’s allotment of both types of masks to area healthcare facilities and is also helping to coordinate other PPE needs requests.

Organizations are also helping one another. Becky Kraenow, Director of HelpCare Clinic offered up 40 unused N95s during the meeting and said, “As a clinic, we’re doing our best to screen patients and send those with COVID-19 concerns to places that are better equipped for that care. We have a small stock of this type of PPE to protect our volunteers if needed, but we are so grateful to be able to donate the rest to a facility that might need it.”

*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.*

*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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**Media Contacts:**

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| **Todd Gottula**University of Nebraska-Kearney gottulatm@unk.edu | **Becky Kraenow**HelpCare Clinic becky@helpcareclinic.com  |