

To our Kearny County Community:

The pandemic rages on. I think this single statement summarizes where we are at as a county. We continue to remain at Public Risk Level 4. This means that risk of viral transmission in our community continues to be high, and also means that our local and regional healthcare systems resources continue to show strain. We will continue to report recent trends of local data, but here is a brief summary:

1. **Clinic:** Family Health Center now has rapid testing available for routine use. This is a very important step in improving our ability to identify COVID19 in our community quickly and efficiently. The clinic is also making changes to accommodate the increasing volume of testing that it is doing on an outpatient basis. If you have symptoms including fevers, chills, loss of taste or smell, cough /congestion / runny nose, shortness of breath, sore throat, or headache, please call the clinic so you can set up a time for clinic evaluation and possible testing. Other symptoms that can also indicate possible infection include diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, fatigue. There are still a few instances in which a rapid test is not indicated, including symptoms for more than 7 days and some preoperative testing. Your provider will help determine the most appropriate test during the clinic evaluation.
2. **Hospital:** KCH overall patient census remains high on average, and COVID census ranges between 3 and 7 inpatients at a time. Historically, the normal hospital census begins to trend up this time of the year, so we are continuing to monitor this closely as we move through the fall and towards the winter months, with development of contingency plans if demand for local hospital beds goes beyond our current capacity.
3. **Regional ICU Bed Capacity:** Overall, ICU beds continue to be very limited in our region and throughout the state. The actual bed availability changes day-to-day, and we continue to closely track this. There are regional and statewide efforts to address this, as the limited ICU bed capacity is seen as one of most pressing problems related to the pandemic at this time.

Again, what can our community do to help? Please continue to **limit large gatherings**. As Thanksgiving approaches, please think about how to limit the size of your gathering during the holiday. Please continue to **wash your hands** frequently.

Finally, please, please, please, **wear a mask** when you are out in our community. We can achieve our goals and keep our county both safe and thriving by working together in this. I ask that you show respect and preference to your family, friends, and neighbors.

Thanks and stay healthy.



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Kearny County Health Officer