

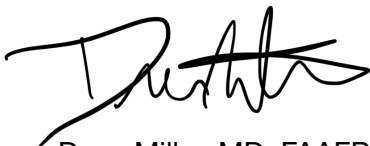
To our Kearny County Community:

Thank you to our entire community for the changes that each of you have made thus far. Thank you also to so many of those in our community who have found ways to encourage and thank our wonderful healthcare workers. As we have said before, no one has been unaffected by this virus. All of our lives have been disrupted. Recently, I have been encouraged that we may be making progress in mitigating and stopping the spread of the virus for 2 reasons:

1. We as a community have started to see a slight “bend” in the curve downwards. This applies to our community and to southwest Kansas as a whole. ICU’s are still full and busy but we can most often find an available bed. Our hospital is still busy but we have been able to admit and take care of those who need to be admitted. Our clinic is busy with acute care visits and COVID evaluations, but not as busy as we were 2 and 3 weeks ago. This shows that the mitigation measures in place - the 3 W’s - are making an impact in our community and in our region.
2. The COVID-19 vaccine is closer to becoming a reality for our community. The vaccine appears to be safe and very effective. Many have asked me what I think about the vaccine and why he or she should get the vaccine. My answer is: the vaccine is our opportunity to return back to “normal.” As we begin to vaccinate over the next weeks and months, the quicker that we can get our community immunized, the quicker we not only slow (mitigate) the spread of the virus but the quicker we eliminate it from our community. The vaccine will first be distributed to the most vulnerable in our community. However, after that, widespread distribution and administration of the vaccine will be essential to decrease cases in our community, which will then drive our county alert indicators down. Getting the vaccine will be a way that you can not only protect yourself from infection, but also a way that you can help to protect our community as a whole.

In the meantime, it is important that we continue with our strategies that are in place - the 3 W’s. “Wash your hands, wear a mask, watch your distance.” Please continue to limit large gatherings. We can continue mitigate the spread of this virus as we work together as a community. Thank you for showing respect and preference to your family, friends, and neighbors.

Thanks and stay healthy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drew Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Drew Miller, MD, FAAFP
Kearny County Health Officer