

## **A Message Concerning COVID-19 and KCVAO Continuity of Operations**

### **PLEASE NOTE: THE FACE MASK ORDER REMAINS IN EFFECT**

**Governor Kelly issued an Executive Order which requires most Kansans to wear a face mask in public places. This new order became effective 12:01 A.M., Wednesday, November 25, 2020. All facilities and/or offices owned or leased by our agency are considered public and therefore all staff, residents and visitors are expected to abide by the order until such a time as it is modified or rescinded.**

**The 2020 Legislature authorized county and local government to opt out of certain Executive Orders. Some of our locations have more restrictive requirements and our staff as well as visitors are expected to follow the most restrictive of any COVID guidance. You are encouraged to contact the location you are seeking services from if you have questions regarding access limitations and personal protective equipment (i.e. face masks).**

**Please read carefully below and contact the numbers listed if you have additional questions.**

The KCVAO continues its dedication to serving communities across the state. Staff continue to monitor local, state and federal mandates concerning the spread and management of the COVID-19 virus. Our agency follows mandates and guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and the Veterans Administration. As a state agency, we continue to operate under Executive Orders and the Department of Administration workplace guidance.

Program specifics are outlined below. Your continued support and understanding is appreciated as we work within the framework established for these unprecedented times.

Leaving voicemails is not recommended as we may not be able to remotely access voicemails and there are limitations on our voicemail capacity. Rather, we ask that you send an email as identified further in this document.

Updates will continue to be provided through Social Media. Our agency Facebook page is [www.facebook.com/kansasvets](http://www.facebook.com/kansasvets). We strive to keep this document current; however, given this changing environment it is possible that local, state or federal mandates will take precedence.

### **CURRENT STATUS (01/08/2021)**

#### **Kansas Soldiers' Home (KSH) at Fort Dodge**

The Kansas Soldiers' Home continues to follow the guidance from all our regulatory agencies, including Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS). CMS has published the Interim Final Rule (CMS-3401-IFC) revision in response to COVID-19 related to Long-Term Care (LTC) facility testing requirements. That rule requires all nursing home facilities to do routine testing of staff based on new parameters and a frequency

set forth by the Health and Human Services Secretary. KDADS has also recently issued guidance that recommends regular testing of staff and residents on a frequency determined by county positivity rates.

The facility has recently experienced an outbreak of COVID 19 in the Long Term Care building. The facility has established a dedicated COVID unit with specific staff designated to care for those residents. All other residents are being encouraged to remain in their rooms to limit risk of exposure.

The facility has offered and began having the COVID-19 vaccine administered to all residents and staff that choose to be vaccinated. The vaccinations began on December 29, 2020, and the second round of shots is scheduled for January 19, 2021 with the final clinic scheduled for February 9, 2021.

The majority of the facility remains closed to the general public. The museum, Sutler's Store and all other non-essential buildings are still closed for non-residents. Access remains limited to emergency personnel, medical staff, and essential deliveries only.

The Veteran Service Representatives have reopened their offices with some restrictions. For further information, refer to the Veteran Services Field Offices section later in this document.

The facility continues through its phased approach to re-opening in compliance with recommendations and requirements by our regulatory agencies. Details are provided to residents, their family members, DPOA's and staff as changes are made.

Entrance to the facility remains limited and everyone entering will be screened, and are required to adhere to social distancing requirements. Any staff or essential visitors who have had illness or fever within the last 72 hours or believe they have had direct exposure to the COVID-19 virus will not be permitted entry into the facility.

The KSH continues to offer virtual visits using various platforms on each unit so that you can video chat with your loved one. For details of information regarding virtual visits, please contact our facility. In addition, window or outdoor visits may be able to be arranged (weather permitting). Again, these visits are subject to equipment and staffing availability, as well as the status and number of COVID positive residents and staff. All types of visitation will be determined by the current phase of the reopening plan. For scheduling, please contact Rosely Garcia at (620) 682-7535, or via e-mail at [rosely.garcia@ksh.state.ks.us](mailto:rosely.garcia@ksh.state.ks.us).

Questions should be directed to 620-227-2121. You may also monitor our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/kansassoldiers.home](https://www.facebook.com/kansassoldiers.home). Emails may also be sent to [david.smith@ksh.state.ks.us](mailto:david.smith@ksh.state.ks.us).

We will continue to provide you with updates as they become necessary. Please know that we are continuing to strictly adhere to all directions from local, state, and federal officials and we are in communication with them about any changes or updates.

### **Kansas Veterans' Home at Winfield**

Please monitor the KVH Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/KVHWFKS](https://www.facebook.com/KVHWFKS) for updates specific to the home. Questions should be directed to 620.221.9479 or emailed to [kpeelee@kcva.org](mailto:kpeelee@kcva.org).

### **State Veterans Cemeteries (Fort Dodge, WaKeeney, Winfield and Fort Riley)**

#### **Wreaths Across America**

Wreaths have been placed on all gravesites. Thank you to our families and volunteers who placed the wreaths. Please visit our beautiful Cemeteries soon. The wreaths will remain on the graves until the end of January.

## **Regular Operations**

All four State Veterans' Cemetery offices are open to receive customers and visitors. Kansas State Veteran Cemeteries at WaKeeney, Fort Dodge and Winfield will allow gravesite services with a limit of 100 people, following the State of Kansas and the National Cemetery Administration guidelines. This limit will not include the Cemetery staff, Honor Guards, or Ministers.

We will follow the State of Kansas and County guidelines or orders for gathering limits. It may be necessary to have different guidelines at one or two cemeteries because new or different orders may be issued in the County that each cemetery is located in.

Fort Riley Veterans Cemetery continues to follow order that was issued by the Riley County Health Department on August 18th, which limits gatherings to 50 persons. The Fort Riley Cemetery will abide by this order and adjust as necessary to future orders. Given this is an ever-changing environment, our cemetery managers continue to monitor the COVID orders and remain in constant contact with funeral homes. It is encouraged that you contact the cemetery manager at the numbers below if you have a question.

Honors will be provided as available. Each Branch of Service, local Service Organization Honor Guards, and the Kansas National Guard will have their own restrictions and guidelines that will be followed. The order of service may change to accommodate those guidelines. If honor guards are not available, Taps will continue to be played for every veteran.

Masks are encouraged at funeral services and mandated if social distancing cannot be followed. Social distancing guidelines will continue to be followed. Funeral services will be conducted under the shelter. Those planning to attend gravesite services are asked to arrive at the shelter no more than 15 minutes prior to scheduled service and depart immediately following the service to keep as minimal contact as possible. Chairs will be spaced and available for immediate family only. Others attending service are asked to stand in family units and to be at least 6 feet away from other family units or individuals. Ministers and families are requested to keep the length of service to a gravesite service. Families and Ministers will not be allowed at the gravesite until burial is complete. Once burial is complete, family is welcome to come back to visit the gravesite.

Staff has contacted all next of kin of those interred during direct burials to schedule a service, if desired. If you have not been contacted and would like a service for a direct burial, please call the cemetery of choice at the numbers below.

Individuals and funeral homes requesting services or have a need to schedule burials should stop by or call the cemetery of choice at the numbers listed below.

Fort Dodge 620.682.7564

WaKeeney 785.743.5685

Winfield 620.705.6300

Fort Riley 785.717.3050

Heidi Goff, Assistant Cemetery Director 785.769.3208

Emails may also be sent to [Heidi.goff@ks.gov](mailto:Heidi.goff@ks.gov)

Eric Rohleder, Cemetery Director 785.296.3976

Emails may also be sent to [Eric.rohleder@ks.gov](mailto:Eric.rohleder@ks.gov)

## **Veteran Services Field Offices**

KCVAO field office locations are open for appointments during normal business hours. Please check our website, [kcva.ks.gov](http://kcva.ks.gov), veteran services tab, for office locations and contact information. For the safety of visitors

and staff, Veteran Services Representatives (VSRs) assist veterans and family members by appointments only. Our offices have been reconfigured and maximum capacities reduced to abide by recommended social distancing criteria. Patrons may be asked to wait in their vehicle or at another location until VSRs are able to accommodate them for a scheduled appointment. As reflected above, our agency will abide by the Governor's Executive Order regarding the wear of face coverings and social distancing. We ask that you mask-up prior to entering a field office location for an appointment. Visitors will be screened upon entering the office. If you feel sick or suspect you are ill, please stay home and call your health care provider to mitigate the spread of Covid-19. Additionally, VSRs will continue to assist veterans and family members over the telephone, by web meeting, and over email if customers are not comfortable with face-to-face visits or if someone is unable to travel to the field office location.

Our central office administrative staff continues to provide any needed assistance. Please contact 785.296.3976 or 800.513.7731 if you require assistance with any of your state or federal veteran benefits. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

### **State Approving Agency**

SAA personnel will complete selected school compliance surveys, program approvals, and other GI Bill benefit services remotely until further notice. Limited on-site school and other location visits will take place as required. Please contact Brigitte Hayes and Joel Gillaspie at their normal phone numbers and emails listed on our website at [kcva.ks.gov](http://kcva.ks.gov) under the veteran Services tab.

### **Fiscal Services**

Staff assigned to Central Office will telework until further notice. Fiscal staff in our state veteran nursing homes will be on-site however; offices will be closed to the public and strict social distancing and infection control protocols will be in place for staff.

### **Human Resources / Jobs at KCVAO**

Human Resources Offices continues to be closed to the public. We post available positions. Job vacancies are listed at [www.jobs.ks.gov](http://www.jobs.ks.gov) with an on-line process to apply. Our agency webpage provides contact information for all HR offices. Applicants must call for information and assistance. Questions concerning employment may also be emailed to [kcva.ks.gov](mailto:kcva.ks.gov). Be sure to include the location you're interested in.

01/08/2021