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Commission on Veterans Affairs Office

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Gregg Burden, Director

Laura Kelly, Governor

A Message Concerning COVID-19 and KCVAO Continuity of Operations

Important Update – Governor Kelly's has announced that she will sign an Executive Order which requires most Kansans to wear a face mask in public places effective 12:01 A.M., Friday July 3, 2020. All facilities and/or offices owned or leased by our agency are considered public and therefore all staff, residents and visitors will be expected to abide by the order until such a time as it is modified or rescinded. Some of our locations have more restrictive requirements. 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. On a daily basis, staff 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.

Specifics to our programs are outlined below. We appreciate the continued support and understanding as we work to balance providing services within the framework established for these unprecedented times.

We continue to request that you do not leave a voicemail because we may not be able to remotely access voicemails and the limitations on the number of voicemails will be exceeded in a short time. 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. 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 (7/02/2020)

Kansas Soldiers' Home (KSH) at Fort Dodge

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

The Veteran Service Representatives will resume operations in their offices at KSH with some restrictions. For further information, refer to the **Veteran Services Field Offices** section below.

The facility is working on a phased re-opening plan in compliance with recommendations and requirements by our regulatory agencies. In house activities have resumed with some conditions and ensuring that Social Distancing protocols are followed. Additional details will be released as operations are resumed.

As mandated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), visitation remains restricted to the public. Entrance to the facility is limited and everyone entering will be screened, and will be 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 Kansas Soldiers' Home (KSH) knows that these limitations ultimately put a strain on you and your loved ones. The KSH continues to have SKYPE availability on each unit so that you can video chat with your loved one. In order to SKYPE you must have SKYPE availability on your cellular device and/or computer.

Questions should be directed to 620.227.2121. You may also monitor our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/kansassoldiers.home. Emails may also be sent to david.smith@ksh.state.ks.us.

Kansas Veterans' Home at Winfield

As mandated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), visitation is currently restricted and closed to the public. Access is limited to emergency personnel, medical staff, and essential deliveries only. Entrance to the facility is limited and everyone entering will be screened, will be 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.

All resident group activities and outings have been suspended. The Kansas Veterans' Home (KVH) knows that these limitations ultimately put a strain on you and your loved ones. The KVH continues to have SKYPE availability on each unit so that you can video chat with your loved one. In order to SKYPE you must have SKYPE availability on your cellular device and/or computer.

The facility is working on a phased re-opening plan in compliance with recommendations and requirements by our regulatory agencies. Details will be released once the plan is finalized and implemented.

Questions should be directed to 620.221.9479. You may also monitor our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/KVHWFKS. Emails may also be sent to kpeele@kcva.org.

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

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 has an order that was issued by the Riley County Health Department the evening of June 23, 2020, limiting gatherings to 50 persons. This will remain in affect until at least July 8th. 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.

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 serves 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 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
Eric Rohleder, Cemetery Director 785.296.3976
Emails may also be sent to Eric.rohleder@ks.gov

Veteran Services Field Offices

All field office locations are open for normal business hours. Please check our website, www.kcva.ks.gov, veteran services tab, for office locations and contact information. For the safety of visitors and staff, Veteran Services Representatives (VSRs) plan to assist veterans and family members by appointments only. Most of our offices have been reconfigured and maximum capacities reduced to abide by 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. 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. 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.

Our central office administrative staff is currently at full strength. Please contact 785.296.3976 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 provide all school compliance surveys and other GI Bill benefit services via telework until further notice. Limited on-site school visits will take place as required in July and August. Please contact Brigette Hayes and Joel Gillaspie at their normal phone numbers and emails listed on our website at www.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 are posting available positions. These are typically positions tied directly to patient care and/or COVID-19. Job vacancies are listed at 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.

07/02/2020