

BG(R) William Turner, Director

Laura Kelly, Governor

A Message from Director BG(R) William Turner Concerning COVID-19 and KCVAO Continuity of Operations

November 1, 2021

Due to the continued spread of COVID-19 Delta, guidance for state agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction has been updated to reflect health and safety practices due to this contagious strain. The Governor's guidance has been extended and this update will remain in place through January 1, 2022, at which time a determination will be made whether to extend.

The full memo is located at <https://www.admin.ks.gov/coronavirus>.

As an agency charged with the care of Veterans and their eligible dependents, the KCVAO follows mandates and guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS), Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), and the Veterans Administration (VA). Because we are a state agency, we additionally follow guidance issued through Executive Orders and Department of Administration memorandums. Our facilities follow the most restrictive personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines within their city, county and/or state.

Remote Work

We continue to provide quality care and services to our Veterans and their families at our locations throughout the state. We will resume remote work for select employees where feasible.

Masks

Masks or other facial coverings will again be required for all State of Kansas employees and visitors to any State of Kansas facilities under the jurisdiction of the Governor.

Notice of the mask requirement will be posted at entrances to all KCVAO buildings and public facing offices throughout the state. Masks will be available (free of charge) to employees and visitors at all appropriate entrances, especially those accessed by the public. Please refer to the memo linked above for additional mask guidance.

Communications

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. You may also contact us by email.

The KCVAO has offices and facilities across the state. To better communicate with our customers, we've outlined specifics by individual services provided. Your continued support and understanding is appreciated as we work to keep our Veterans, staff and customers health and welfare a priority against this pandemic.

Updates will continue to be provided through Social Media. Our agency Facebook page is www.facebook.com/kansasvets. Each of our state veterans' homes also have Facebook pages and their information is listed below. We strive to keep this document current; however, given this changing environment it is possible that local, state or federal mandates will take precedence.

PROGRAM STATUS (10/08/2021)

Kansas Soldiers' Home & Kansas Veterans' Home

We will continue to honor and care for Veterans and their eligible dependents. We are continuing to accept applications for admissions and admitting all eligible applicants.

Our Homes remain **open to visitors**. Entrance to our facilities 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.

We recognize the importance of you being able to stay connected with your loved one. Visitation at our Homes may be conducted through various methods as we strive to meet the individual needs of our residents while adhering to the core principles and best practices that reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

All visitors must schedule their visits in advance and adhere to the following:

- Screening upon entry to the facilities, regardless of visitation location
- Face masks or coverings are required at all times while on the property
- Testing of all visitors is encouraged and will be offered upon arrival
- Weather permitting, outdoor visitation is still preferred, regardless of vaccination status
- Indoor visits, beyond compassionate care situations, will be determined by the presence of COVID-19 on campus and the county positivity rate for COVID-19 testing
- Visits will be limited to a specific duration to allow more residents to have visitors
- Movement through the facilities will be restricted to and from the designated visitation area
- Shared rooms shall not be the location of a visit, with the exception of compassionate care visits
- If a resident is fully vaccinated, contact with visitors is allowed. Residents that have not been fully vaccinated are required to adhere to social distancing during the visits.
- Virtual visits are on-going and a great way to stay connected to your loved one

If an outbreak occurs, the visitation policy will be amended.

Both Homes continue to have SKYPE and Zoom availability on each unit so that you can video chat with your loved one. In order to use one of these services, you must have the appropriate application or software availability on your cellular device and/or computer.

All **KSH visits** need to be scheduled in advance. *For visitation scheduling, please contact Rosely Garcia at (620) 682-7535, or via e-mail at rosely.garcia@ksh.state.ks.us.*

All **KVH visits** are to be scheduled through the Admissions Coordinator. *To schedule a visit or for questions, please contact Tracy Bruce at (620) 705-6262 or Sonya Greenstreet at (620) 705-6375, Monday thru Friday between 8 am-5 pm.*

Infection Control

General standard precautions are followed at all times including respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, environmental cleaning and disinfecting, and cleaning and disinfecting medical equipment. Appropriate hand hygiene practices (e.g., alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) or soap and water) are always followed. Unless hands are visibly soiled, an alcohol-based hand rub is preferred over soap and water in most clinical-type situations. PPE or Personal Protective Equipment is worn as deemed appropriate for the level of caution necessary.

Our Homes have an established Infection control Program in place to provide a safe, sanitary and comfortable environment to help prevent the development and transmission of disease and infection with the objective to keep residents and staff as safe as possible at all times. Additional measures that have been put in place include screening all staff and visitors upon entrance, limiting entrances and exits to one entrance/exit per building. The screener has been trained to properly utilize the screening tool assessment and will not allow entry if certain conditions are present in accordance with CMS and CDC guideline. A staff and visitor log is maintained at each entrance and is a useful tool if contact tracing should become necessary. The screener will instruct staff and visitors to adhere to the principles and guidelines listed above for infection control purposes.

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

Our Homes continue to follow the guidance from all our regulatory agencies, including Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS). The guidance 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. The guidance continues to recommend regular testing of staff and residents on a frequency determined by county positivity rates. The staff continues to regularly clean and sanitize all areas of the facility using processes, equipment and products to ensure the safety of residents, visitors and staff.

Questions regarding the **KSH** should be directed to 620-227-2121. You may also monitor the KSH Facebook page at www.facebook.com/kansassoldiers.home. Emails may also be sent to david.smith@ksh.state.ks.us.

Questions regarding the **KVH** should be directed to 620.221.9479. You may also monitor the KVH 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 with screening check-ins at the temperature kiosk. Veterans and their families' safety are always our concern. Kansas Veteran Cemeteries at WaKeeney, Fort Dodge, Fort Riley/Manhattan, and Winfield will allow gravesite services, following the State of Kansas and National Cemetery Administration guidelines.

Honors will be provided as available. Each Branch of Service, local Service Organization Honor Guards, and the Kansas National Guard Honors Team 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 required for everyone working and visiting the cemeteries. Social distancing guidelines of 6 feet will continue. 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 allow for minimal contact. Ministers and families are requested to keep the length of service limited to a gravesite service only and will not be allowed at the gravesite until interment is complete. Once interment is complete, family is welcome to come back to visit the gravesite.

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 785.639.1972 or 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

Our field office Veteran Services Representatives (VSRs) continue to assist Veterans and Family Members across the state. The safety of visitors and staff remain a top priority. VSRs will telework at all field office locations and will conduct appointments with Veterans and other business via email, telephone and/or video conferencing (i.e., Microsoft Teams, ZOOM). In select circumstances where in-person interactions may be required, masks or other facial coverings are mandatory for the public or other visitors, regardless of the individual's vaccination status. Contact information for each field office VSR can be found on our agency website at www.kcva.ks.gov. Itinerant travel and outreach services will be suspended until at least October 29th at which time the situation will be evaluated further.

Please FAX any required documents for claims development to our central office at 785.296.1462. No field office staff will use their local fax machines while teleworking.

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 Brigette Hayes and Joel Gillaspie at their normal phone numbers and emails listed on our website at kcva.ks.gov under the veteran Services tab.

Fiscal Services

As a result of updated state agency guidance relating to COVID-19 Delta, staff assigned to Central Office will continue to work remotely. The business offices at both state nursing facilities will be closed to the public and strict social distancing and infection control protocols will be in place. **Until further notice, most** business office staff will work remotely **with at least one person in the office each business day.** As always, residents at both homes will retain access to their accounts through the business offices.

Human Resources / Jobs at KCVAO

Kansas Veterans' Home HR

Currently, the Human Resources office at the Kansas Veterans Home in Winfield is not open to walk-in applicants. Please call them at (620)705-6222 for further information and assistance. Recruitment and interviews continue in a manner that creates the safest environment.

Kansas Soldiers' Home HR

Currently, the Human Resources office at the Kansas Soldiers' Home in Fort Dodge is not open to walk-in applicants. Please call them at (620)227-2121, Option 2 for further information and assistance. Recruitment and interviews continue in a manner that creates the safest environment.

All Other Positions

All vacant positions for the agency are posted at www.jobs.ks.gov with an on-line process to apply.

Our agency webpage at www.kcva.ks.gov provides contact information for all HR offices.

11/01/2021