TO: Community Partners

FROM: Robert Copple, Interim Administrator Wamego Health Center and Leslie Campbell, Pottawatomie County Health Department Director/Local Health Officer

DATE: January 13, 2022

RE: Hospitals Need Your Help Now

The COVID-19 pandemic is more than a healthcare crisis. Healthcare workers can't bring this to an end. It requires everyone in the community to do their part.

 We are asking for your help in mobilizing your members to help. Now.

There is no time to waste.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AND WHAT'S COMING

 "Viral Blizzard" is the perfect term for what hospitals and Pottawatomie County are experiencing now and will continue through early 2022.

The Delta and Omicron variants are highly contagious, with COVID-19 case totals doubling in days, not weeks. The CDC says that nationally the Omicron variant is responsible for 70%+ of cases and projects <u>one million new cases a day by next month</u>. Yesterday, 100 new cases of Covid 19 were diagnosed in Pottawatomie increasing our active cases to 452 cases.

In light of these numbers we are encouraging you to **decrease your numbers of spectators at this week-end tournament – one parent per child, no siblings, have everyone wear a mask, do not congregate in groups in the common areas, try to space everyone 6 feet apart.** Our systems are stressed and cannot manage any more spread.

 People still have heart attacks and strokes, break limbs, have car accidents, come down with the flu and get diagnosed with cancer in a pandemic. Folks are coming to us sicker than ever because they've delayed getting care. The beds and caregivers they need are being taxed by COVID-19 patients who are mostly unvaccinated.

People are sick and dying unnecessarily. Our teams are frustrated and demoralized because the vast majority of COVID-19 cases in our hospitals are preventable. There are vaccines and boosters that are highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death.

And we know what's coming. Hospitals are experiencing a surge 2-4 weeks after a holiday. Trouble is – we were already surging before the holiday season began.

10 WAYS EVERY PERSON CAN HELP And the good news is – it's easy to do

Wear a mask, watch your distance and wash your hands.

Stay home if you're not feeling well - and away from people in your household to keep them safe.

Know before you go. You can have COVID with no symptoms and spread the virus to others, who may not be so lucky. Get tested before attending any meetings or large gatherings.

If you test positive using an at-home COVID-19 test and are looking to confirm it, the best place to go is a dedicated community testing location. Locations can be found on coronavirus.kdheks.gov

Looking for a COVID test? Visit a dedicated community testing location. A list can be found by visiting coronavirus.kdheks.gov

Plan ahead and know the hours of operation for testing locations.

Medical emergencies For people experiencing symptoms of a heart attack, stroke, mental health or other acute illness or injury, a hospital emergency room is still the safest, most appropriate place to get care. If someone is experiencing a life-threatening emergency, difficulty breathing or warning signs of a heart attack or stroke, they should not delay, but go directly to the emergency room or dial 911.

If you are not experiencing serious illness or injuries,knowing where and what type of care is available to you can get you quicker care for things like fever, cough, sore throat, and more. This could include services like virtual visits and urgent care centers.

Get vaccinated Vaccines are free, safe and effective at preventing serious illness, hospitalization and even death. Vaccines are approved for everyone age 5 and up.

Get boosted If you've completed your primary vaccine series, get your booster dose. Boosters are approved for everyone age 12 and up.

You trust us with your health when you need us most. Please do everything in your power to help us bring this pandemic to an end.