

We are a mission-driven organization with deep roots in our community. The services we provide are fundamental to the lives of the people we serve, their families and our community. We are driven by a higher moral purpose to serve this population in accordance with our mission. We care deeply about the role we play to provide much-needed care, services and support in people's lives.

We are dedicated to continuing to provide quality care with Christian compassion during these challenging circumstances, while also maintaining honest and transparent communication with our staff, residents, participants and their loved ones.

FAQ's

How will Bluestem Communities inform us if there is a known active confirmed case of COVID-19?

Our website will be updated by 5:00 p.m. the following day of our knowledge of:

- A new confirmed case of COVID-19 at any Bluestem location.
 - This includes residents, staff members or PACE participants.
- A cluster of suspected cases at any Bluestem location.
 - A cluster of suspected cases is defined by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) as three or more persons who develop new onset respiratory symptoms within a 72-hour period.
 - This includes residents, staff members or PACE participants.

The [TEST RESULTS](#) link in the intro section of the COVID web page is where you can find these totals.

If you do have a known active confirmed case, can you give us specific information about who has tested positive for COVID-19 and whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated?

To protect the privacy of the residents, participants and staff, and in accordance with HIPAA regulations, we cannot disclose the names or vaccination status of individuals who test positive or other details that would identify them. That being said, please understand that we have had vaccinated staff and residents test positive, the majority with mild symptoms. If a staff or resident tests positive, one should not assume they are unvaccinated.

We recognize the many concerns that our family members and others have for the safety of our residents, participants and staff, and their potential exposure to coronavirus. We continue to monitor our assisted living and health care residents and PACE participants for any signs or symptoms of coronavirus through regular temperature checks and routine assessments. If a resident or participant exhibits signs of COVID-19, they are placed in precautionary isolation. We then complete an antigen test which provides results in 15 minutes. If the test is positive, the resident remains in isolation and we notify their physician and DPOA for health care. Additionally, we screen all employees as they enter our building each day.

What are you doing to stop the spread?

As required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and CMS, there were and are many measures in place in our communities to stop the spread of this virus. Much of the below is done on a daily basis. The requirements within assisted living and health care resident living settings are determined by CMS and may change depending on the current COVID status of each living area.

These measures include:

- Stringent infection prevention and control measures and education.
- Screening all persons (including staff) who enter our buildings, including temperature checks.
- All staff and visitors are required to wear masks, regardless of their vaccination status
- Closely monitoring residents and participants.
- Any new admissions to assisted living or health care are tested for COVID prior to or upon admission. If they test positive, these individuals are immediately placed in isolation and their provider and DPOA for health care is notified. Unvaccinated residents from the community admitted to assisted living and health care are placed in precautionary isolation for 14 days for monitoring of any signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- Physical distancing is required for residents and participants who are not fully vaccinated.
- Residents/participants wear masks when they are outside their rooms/home and when a staff member is present in their room/home.

How are you treating people suspected of having COVID-19?

Any treatment is provided in close coordination with the medical directors and attending physicians. As soon as someone begins exhibiting symptoms, they are tested for COVID-19. If the test is positive, they are placed in isolation in their home and care is provided with staff wearing full PPE. It's important to note that this virus has the potential to impact people very differently. Some people develop milder symptoms, while some develop very serious symptoms immediately and without much warning.

Are all your assisted living and health care residents and staff going to be tested in the event of a positive COVID-19 test?

Recent CMS guidance indicates that contact tracing with positive staff or resident identification is appropriate to determine who needs to be tested. Only the residents who were close contacts are tested. The testing timing and frequency following exposure is based on whether the resident has been vaccinated. Vaccinated residents do not need to be in quarantine following exposure and are monitored three times per day for symptoms along with intermittent testing. If the resident develops symptoms,

they are tested and placed in isolation pending test results. Unvaccinated residents are placed in quarantine for 14 days following exposure and monitored three times per day for symptoms and tested intermittently. Any resident who tests positive for COVID is placed in isolation until authorization for release from isolation is received from Harvey County Health Department.

In accordance with CMS mandates, unvaccinated staff are tested regularly based on the level of community transmission in the county. When the county's level of community transmission is at a "moderate" level, testing occurs once per week. When the level of community transmission is "substantial or high", staff testing occurs two times per week.

Do family members of staff who received precautionary testing elsewhere need to be isolated or stay at home until results are received?

No. With precautionary testing, family members of tested staff should continue to work and go about other daily tasks as usual, taking all the appropriate precautions. If they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they should seek treatment from their physician.

Has the federal staff vaccine mandate been enacted at Bluestem Communities?

On November 4, 2021, CMS published an interim final rule regarding mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for employees working in certain types of health care facilities. Based on regulations from CMS, and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), Bluestem Communities has implemented a mandatory vaccination policy. This policy is effective November 12, 2021, and requires COVID-19 vaccination(s) for all employees, volunteers, licensed practitioners, contracted personnel and students. As of December 5, 2021, every employee must have received the first dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccination series (or a one-dose COVID-19 vaccination) unless a medical or religious exemption is requested and approved. By January 4, 2022, all employees must be fully vaccinated, or have an approved medical or religious exemption. New hires are expected to meet these requirements for vaccination, or to have an approved medical or religious exemption by their start date. Prospective candidates for employment will be notified of the requirements of this policy prior to the start of employment.

Bluestem Communities will pay employees for time spent receiving the vaccinations and for limited time off due to side effects caused by receiving the vaccination. Individuals seeking an exemption from the vaccination requirement for medical or religious reasons should complete a request for accommodation form and submit the form to the Human Resources Department for consideration.

Unvaccinated staff who have not been approved for a medical or religious exemption will be notified by December 3, 2021, that they may resign by December 5, 2021, or their employment will be terminated on December 5, 2021.

The CMS Interim Final Rule has been placed on hold as of November 29, 2021, via preliminary injunction, pending final ruling by U.S. District Court. Below is Bluestem's current stand:

Bluestem Communities continues to emphasize the importance of vaccination and booster updates for all of its employees to promote the health and safety of our residents, staff and the greater community. We have and will continue to honor medical and religious exemption requests. Staff who have not already done so are invited to submit requests for medical or religious exemptions no later than 12/3/21. We continue to review the recent court ruling and will be issuing a revised policy as we receive more guidance. At this time, based on this preliminary court injunction, no employee will be terminated from their position on 12/6/21.

Is your staff wearing masks?

Yes. We are following CDC guidelines concerning masks and other personal protective equipment. Staff working in our designated areas where residents are being monitored or treated for COVID-19 are wearing N95 masks. Staff working with all other health care/assisted living residents and participants, as well as staff who are in the building but not in direct contact with residents, are wearing KN95 or surgical masks.

Are visitors to independent living homes allowed?

We are supportive of resident non-essential visitors to independent living homes as well as other resident social connections. We are not yet welcoming visitors to gather in any common indoor areas, but visits to outdoor common areas are welcome.

As a family member, how can I help?

The best way you can help us is to continue to remain vigilant following the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and advocate with others to do the same:

- Wear a mask when indoors in public buildings and avoid large gatherings regardless of your vaccination status.
- Vaccine options available in our area include the Harvey County Health Department, 316-283-1637, or [VaccineFinder.org](https://www.vaccinefinder.org) will show you where to schedule an appointment with a provider including but not limited to:
 - Axtell Clinic
 - Dillon's
 - Harvey Drug
 - Health Ministries
 - Hesston Pharmacy
 - Hillsboro Hometown Pharmacy
 - Walgreens
 - Walmart

I have more questions, who do I contact?

Families with questions should use the contact methods below:

- If your family member is a Bluestem PACE participant: 620-504-5917
- If your family member lives at Kidron Bethel Village: 316-284-2900
- If your family member lives at Schowalter Villa: 620-327-3400
- Members of the media should contact Ariana Kauffman, VP of Marketing, at arianak@bluestemks.org or 316-836-4866.

As a community member, how can I help?

We've had many requests from the community asking how they can help support our residents during this time. Here are some ideas:

1) Send a BLUESTEM BOOST!

Let's all continue to live well! We are requesting letters, poems, fun photos, words of encouragement and drawings to share with residents! Please send to: livewell@bluestemks.org

Your message will be shared with all residents who need an extra boost, however if you have a specific resident you want your encouragement to go to please type their name and campus in the subject line. (Example: John Smith – Schowalter Villa)

Thanks for sharing connection, creativity and love with residents during this challenging time. We appreciate your support and encouragement!

- #### **2) Pray for our residents, participants and staff.** Pray that God will continue to sustain us and give us wisdom during this difficult time and that we may grow to love one another more deeply through this experience. Ask God to give us wellbeing, endurance and peace.
- #### **3) Encourage your friends and family and those that live in our community to get vaccinated to help protect all of the community.** Bluestem Communities are impacted by the communities around us.