



May 5, 2020

Dear Meadowlark Independent Living Residents,

As you are likely aware, Governor Laura Kelly has announced her plan to remove restrictions put in place to control COVID-19. Additionally, Riley County has issued local rules for the four phases of the re-opening plan. Beginning May 4, restaurants can operate at 50-percent occupancy with six feet of separation between tables. I, like all of you, am excited to see life return to normal, or at least a new normal. However, it is important that we remain informed and aware of the risk factors that we face as the nation, state, and city begin to conduct business in a more normal fashion.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wrote, “Given their congregated nature and resident population served (eg., older adults often with underlying chronic medical conditions), nursing home populations are at the highest risk of being affected by COVID-19.”**

In fact, we are seeing both the infection and fatality rates at levels much higher than the rest of the population. Currently over 20-percent of all deaths in the US related to COVID-19 have been in nursing homes and many believe that to be under reported. The London School of Economics reported on April 17, 2020 that 64-percent of all deaths in Norway were people living in care homes. The same source reported Canada at 57-percent, Ireland at 55-percent, and both Belgium and France at 49-percent.

COVID-19 is an ongoing serious risk to all older adults; especially those with underlying health conditions who live in a congregated environment. So, while the world around us begins to get back to business as usual, Meadowlark will not. We all must do our part to ensure we minimize the risk of introducing COVID-19 into Meadowlark. We fight COVID-19 by not introducing it to our campus!

Here are the actions we all need to abide by as the stay-at-home order is lifted and we are in the community:

- Practice social Distancing (minimum of six feet)
- Wash hands well and often
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after contact with high-touch surfaces, such as doorknobs, fuel pump handles, and touch pads
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in your home daily

- Cover coughs or sneezes and then wash your hands
- Wear a cloth face covering when around other people
- Stay home as much as possible
- Avoid touching our eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands

Meadowlark remains closed to visitors as has been instructed by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS). How long that will last is unknown. Over the next two to four weeks we will learn more about the presence of COVID-19 in our community and the rate of spread. That information will shape future requirements.

Currently Meadowlark's staff team ask each IL resident to abide by the following:

- Do not leave campus unless going to an urgent medical appointment (follow above actions)
- Use telemedicine when available
- Order groceries and have it delivered
- Maintain six feet of separation and wear a mask if you are in a public space on campus
- Do not gather in groups larger than 10 people (remember to social distance and use a mask)

It is important for all of us to consider the ramification of a resident contracting COVID-19. Lives would certainly be jeopardized and the risk of spread in our environment would be significant. Further restrictions might need to be implemented, potentially at the direction of CDC, CMS, KDADS, or the local health department. Our period of campus restrictions would undoubtedly be lengthened. It is not worth taking chances right now.

This is a reminder that our expectations for independent living residents have not changed. We will communicate when it is safe to begin returning to normal and a phased plan will be initiated. Information is communicated regularly through the twice weekly Messengers, Channel 1960 News, the Meadowlark website ([www.meadowlark.org](http://www.meadowlark.org)), our Facebook page (@meadowlarkmhk), and through the weekly wellness phone calls.

Meadowlark's process will be slower than the state, county, and city. *If you have not heard from Meadowlark that COVID-19 precautions are relaxing, then they aren't changing.*

Thank you for all you do to keep yourself and others healthy. In this unprecedented time, remember to check on your friends, neighbors, and family through phone calls, text messages, video chats, and email. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions.

Stay safe and well,

*Lonnie Baker*

CEO, Meadowlark