FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Department Revises Daily COVID Testing Protocol.

On January 10, 2022 the City-Cowley County Health Department learned that prioritization for rapid antigen testing used to detect the presence of the SARS-CoV2 virus and its variants was shifting from the general public to school districts statewide. The result of the change will severely impact the capacity of the Health Department to test large numbers of county residents on a daily basis beginning immediately.

During the last week the health department has tested on average 70 people per day with peak days on which more than 100 people were tested which spurred the expansion of testing by adding an afternoon drive up lane to accommodate increased demand due to a spike in the local illness rate. When the health department reached out to have more tests sent to Cowley County we were informed of the stark news.

The problem is a test supply issue. The State Health Department (KDHE) has supplied public health departments with COVID testing supplies since the start of the pandemic. The expansion of testing nationwide and the increased demand for test kits has outpaced the supply. Locally we anticipate that we will exhaust the current supply of rapid antigen tests on Tuesday January 11, 2022. Many other locations in the state and nationally report that they are out of tests.

Internally the Health Department will seek to enhance our capacity to perform internal lab PCR testing and third-party lab testing in which samples are collected and sent away for processing, but those tests will not provide the same day rapid results that people have come to expect. We will work to determine daily capacity and publish a revised schedule for testing which likely will require a specific appointment and be very limited due to the time needed to process the tests.

We regret that this is happening now especially in light of the expanded need to identify new cases of COVID in the community.

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