



## PRESS RELEASE

### COVID-19 Testing Tent at NTMC

March 27, 2020 – Gainesville, Texas – North Texas Medical Center (NTMC) is working closely with the City of Gainesville, Cooke County and Muenster Memorial Hospital (MMH) to closely monitor regional coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and implement the latest care guidelines. These public agencies are releasing a joint statement about the cooperative effort and encouraging our community to take steps to keep healthy.

Judge Jason Brinkley states, "For the past several weeks, our local agencies have been working closely together on a unified response to this pandemic. I am proud of the efforts of so many hardworking individuals coming together to serve our great community."

COVID-19 is spreading globally and we can expect to see more cases throughout our county. We are taking proactive precautions with guidance from all local agencies and the Center for Disease Control by following all recommendations to keep Cooke County safe from this virus.

"While we currently have no reported cases in Cooke County, we have collected all our resources and we are prepared. We encourage calm and unification in adhering to shelter and closure orders. Please continue to check on your neighbors, the elderly, and those you know in need. We have an incredible community filled with amazing people, together we will beat this virus. Please continue to pray for all." says Mayor Jim Goldsworthy.

NTMC, City of Gainesville, Cooke County, and MMH are actively engaged and prepared as needs for community engagement efforts arise due to COVID-19. A temporary medical testing station has been set up in the back parking lot of NTMC. This testing station is being used for two specific stages of operation.

First, and currently, it is a drive-through COVID-19 sample station for patients that meet very strict criteria. Those criteria include:

- The patient must speak with their primary care physician (PCP) to determine if the patient will require the COVID-19 testing. If you do not have a PCP, there are many medical clinics in town accepting new patients.
- If testing is required, the physician requests the patient be tested.
- An appointment will be scheduled for a specimen to be collected at the drive through collection site. The drive through collection site is only accessible from Old Sivells Bend Road.
- Upon arrival, the patient will follow the instructions given to them by the ordering physician. Windows of the vehicle should not be rolled down for any reason until they receive specific instruction at the collection site.



- The patient will have the sample taken, drive home to self quarantine, and await the results from their primary care provider. The collected specimen must be sent to an approved testing site. There is no guarantee that turnaround times of the tests are dependent on the capacity of the lab processing the test.

Anyone arriving at the tent without an appointment from their PCP will be turned away. Law enforcement is on hand to ensure the safety of the workers and patients in the area.

Secondly, the tent located in the same parking lot is NOT part of the drive-through collection efforts you might be seeing in other counties. The tent is part of our joint surge plan if volume increases to the point that the mere numbers are causing operational and safety concerns for our patients. The tent is not in use now and will not be used unless COVID-19 related illness pushes past the capacity of NTMC and MMH. At that point, the emergency department waiting area will be closed and all triage operations will be moved to the tent. EMS will still transport patients to the emergency department. The tent will be for patients that are self presenting such as a cut or a broken arm.

Tom Sledge, CEO, NTMC says "Our hope is that the tent will not be needed or used, but we have to be as prepared as possible for our citizens and felt it was necessary to prepare. The best outcome is the COVID-19 epidemic subsides and due to the precautions the community is taking, we are able to maintain operations in the hospital."

Brian Roland, CEO, MMH adds "With the COVID-19 situation changing virtually every minute, Muenster Memorial Hospital stands with our brothers and sisters on the front lines of the pandemic in preparing to handle whatever may come our way. No one stands alone at a time like this, and rest assured, MMH is working hand in hand with North Texas Medical Center, Cooke County, the cities of Gainesville and Muenster and other agencies to manage any influx of patients and provide patient care in a manner that protects everyone."

Both NTMC and MMH have been working closely with the local health department and emergency management team and have been consistently utilizing CDC directed protocols to care for those who may show signs and symptoms of respiratory illness. All entities are united and committed to doing all we can to care for our community to keep our residents informed.

A Joint Information Facebook page has been established by the local COVID-19 Unified Command, composed of Public Information Officers with: The City of Gainesville, Cooke County, North Texas Medical Center, and Muenster Memorial Hospital. This page has been established to provide consistent, uniform and timely messaging for delivery to the citizens we all serve. This page should be your official source of local credible information. Follow us at: Cooke County Pandemic Information Page, as we work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19.