



For Immediate Release: March 18, 2020
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COVID-19: EveryStep's Preparation, Prevention and Practices *Hospice home visitor restrictions implemented and other program disruptions*

EveryStep's top priority is the safety and health of its employees, volunteers and the people in our care.

EveryStep stands beside the people we serve, and we are taking steps to ensure our programs continue to offer care and support to our patients, clients and their families throughout the COVID-19 crisis. A dedicated webpage, <https://www.everystep.org/about/covid19>, offers EveryStep's response, evolving updates and resources related to COVID-19.

As the situation with COVID-19 changes, EveryStep has taken daily steps to make sure our workforce is informed, healthy and prepared to respond.

Over the weekend the situation around COVID-19 in Iowa changed when the Governor and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) communicated that an individual tested positive for the Coronavirus through "community spread," meaning they did not contract the virus abroad.

In light of this, IDPH made several recommendations and based on their new position. As a result, EveryStep activated its Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP), effective Sunday, March 15, 2020.

Under EveryStep's EPP, the organization will take measured and vital steps to ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers, clients, patients and their families. While we continue to operate many of our programs and services as normal, some have been impacted by the new situation.

EveryStep is evaluating alternative ways to provide support to its patients/clients, including the use of virtual communication tools and printed or digital educational resources.

Employee Preparations and Prevention

As part of EveryStep's EPP, staff will be tasked with following new health protocols for their own health and that of our patients and clients. The following measures are now required:

- All EveryStep staff who are not self-isolating at home and are coming into a work location or completing home visits are required to record daily temperature and absence of COVID-19 symptoms, and report any COVID-19 symptoms each morning to their immediate supervisors. Staff are not permitted to enter a work location and/or patient/client home until or unless they are fever- and symptom-free for at least 48 hours (without medication).

- If an employee has immediate family members who are experiencing fever, COVID-19 symptoms and/or have an exposure to or an active COVID-19 diagnosis while living in same dwelling, the employee will need to self-isolate by staying home.
- All EveryStep staff are provided information about the risk factors for contracting COVID-19. Employees are asked to self-select and signal to their supervisors if they are identifying with factors that are high risk (such as being 60 years of age or older and certain types of health conditions). Individuals who have signaled high risk status will be accommodated and supported for any request for accomplishing social distancing.
- EveryStep employees are expected to practice respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
- EveryStep is also honoring the practices and protocols put in place by its community healthcare partners.

Public Access to EveryStep's Locations

We have made the decision to close all EveryStep offices to the public, EXCEPT the following locations:

- Kavanagh House on 56th Street, 900 56th St., Des Moines
- Greater Regional Hospice Home, 1111 Country Club Dr., Creston

EveryStep's 9th Street offices, 1111 9th St., and Bright Kavanagh Center, 3000 Easton Blvd., both in Des Moines, will be closed to the public starting **Friday, March 20**.

Our offices in Centerville, Council Bluffs, Creston, Knoxville, Mount Ayr, Mt. Pleasant, Osceola, West Des Moines and Winterset, as well as Bright Kavanagh Center, will continue to have vital staff present, can be reached by phone or fax, and will accept critical deliveries of supplies. Deliveries to our 9th Street location will be redirected to Bright Kavanagh Center. However, the offices will not be open to the general public.

Additionally, EveryStep has suspended all in-person volunteer services, including our hospice volunteer visits, Senior Companion program, Amanda the Panda volunteers and those working at our EveryStep Giving Tree thrift store, until further notice. EveryStep is working to creatively identify other ways in which volunteers can support EveryStep programs during the COVID-19 crisis, while honoring social distancing protocols.

Hospice House Changes

Effective March 17, EveryStep is implementing new visitor guidelines at its Kavanagh House on 56th Street in Des Moines and Greater Regional Hospice Home in Creston. Due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus:

- We are limiting entry to only two visitors for each patient at a time.
- Because children don't always show typical symptoms of the virus (fever and cough), we are limiting access to adults 18 years or older. We recognize that it may be important for some children to visit a loved one for healthy grieving and closure. If a visitor feels such a need exists, they are asked to speak with the hospice house director or other leader on staff, who can safely accommodate the request.
- EveryStep staff are screening all visitors as they enter our hospice houses for possible COVID-19 exposure or symptoms. Anyone who may have been exposed to COVID-19 or is symptomatic in any way, will be asked leave, with EveryStep's sincerest apologies for the hardship and our offers to help bridge communication between the visitor and the patient.
- Anyone visiting patients – staff and visitors - must wash or sanitize their hands prior to entering a patient room.

Home-Visiting Program Changes

EveryStep operates a number of programs in which staff visit the homes of our patients and clients. Like many healthcare providers, EveryStep is challenged with securing adequate supplies of critically necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) and other resources that are vital to ensure the safe delivery of care to our patients/clients in their homes and the protection of our healthcare workers.

As a result, effective at noon on Friday, March 20, EveryStep will discontinue home-based visits with patients, clients and their family members, with the exception of our home care and hospice patients.

This change includes visits in the participants' homes, as well as individual visits scheduled to occur at our office locations. EveryStep leaders are currently developing plans for communication with participants via a variety of available tele-health options, and will be in touch as details are determined.

EveryStep is now contacting home care and hospice patients/clients in advance of employees entering their homes to determine if anyone in the home is sick, running a fever or reporting possible exposure to COVID-19.

If a family cannot be contacted prior to visiting the home, no employee should enter a home until the occupants are screened using an internal symptom assessment tool. If any member, or current visitor, of a household meets the criteria, the EveryStep staff member will immediately leave the home, reschedule the appointment and ensure follow-up phone support for the patient/client.

Program/Service Interruptions

With the nature of EveryStep's many programs, we have made the determination that meetings, events and services will be temporarily paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, through at least May 16.

Affected programs and events include grief support groups/events offered through EveryStep's hospice and Amanda the Panda programs, EveryStep Foundation' Game On! Helping Families Move Forward fundraising event, the Senior Companion program, the Stork's Nest program, EveryStep Giving Tree thrift store operations and the Play & Learn program.

For up-to-date information on cancelations and postponements, visit our [website](#).

EveryStep is dedicated to providing compassionate care to our patients, clients and employees. With the current fluid nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, we understand that things will change quickly and often. We are prepared to address your concerns and questions. Please do not hesitate to call EveryStep at 800-806-9934 or email info@everystep.org.

About EveryStep

Compassion is at the core of the more than 30 programs offered by EveryStep, a non-profit organization formerly known as HCI Care Services & Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa. Its family of services includes EveryStep Hospice and EveryStep Home Care, Kavanagh House on 56th Street in Des Moines and Greater Regional Hospice Home in Creston, Amanda the Panda, Stork's Nest, Storybook Project, Healthy Start, and many more. Annually, EveryStep provides care and support to more than 65,000 people across the state of Iowa. There is at least one EveryStep program available to residents in every Iowa county. Learn more at everystep.org or on Facebook at [everystepiowa](https://www.facebook.com/everystepiowa).