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RURAL HEALTH LINK: THE RURAL TRIBAL COVID-19 QUARTERLY DIGEST



The **Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC)** and **Seven Directions** would like to welcome you to the first issue of the **Rural Health Link: The Rural Tribal COVID-19 Quarterly Digest**. This newsletter will share program updates, the technical assistance schedule of events, as well as a variety of resources focused on COVID-19 and tribal health. Each issue will also feature a grantee spotlight article and video. We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments or recommendations for future content, please reach out to us at chsdtteam@gsu.edu.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT



Grantee Profile: The Village of Aniak

The Village of Aniak plans to purchase masks, gloves, gowns, and face shields to protect health care providers when they are conducting COVID-19 testing. Because Aniak is a hub for regional flights, their goal is to establish a testing site at the airfield.

The Georgia Health Policy Center recently spoke with Laura Simeon, tribal administrator CEO for the Aniak Traditional Council, and Wayne Morgan, chief of the Aniak Traditional Council.

[Read More](#)

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC UPDATES

Rural Tribal COVID-19 Response (RTCR): Technical Assistance Kick-Off Webinar

Just as a reminder the slides and recording from the Technical Assistance Kick-Off Webinar held on Oct. 8, 2020, have been posted to our grantee website, www.ruralhealthlink.org. You may find the materials directly on the Rural Tribal COVID-19 Response Grant page at <https://ruralhealthlink.org/rural-tribal-covid-19-response-program/>.

RTCR: Addressing Urgent Needs Webinar

The slides, recording and resources from the Addressing Urgent Needs webinar held on November 17, 2020, have been posted as well, you can find them on your grant page at <https://ruralhealthlink.org/rural-tribal-covid-19-response-program>.

Upcoming Webinar: Psychological First Aid on Jan. 7, 2021

Stay tuned for an invitation to the upcoming RTCR Webinar on Psychological First Aid with Dr. Kristen Lindgren!

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UPDATES

RTCR Quarterly Technical Assistance Schedule Quarter 1: September - December 2020

Overview of Quarterly Activities: In this first quarter of the RTCR, technical assistance (TA) is focused on providing support that helps to begin building a solid foundation for your grant program and developing relationships and creating linkages across your fellow grantees.



Monthly Calls

In October and November everyone participated in Introductory TA introductory calls and the initial drafting of TA action plans. Starting in November, RTCR grantees began regular monthly TA calls with their TA consultant and project officer. These monthly calls serve to keep everyone connected with your RTCR efforts and ensure that TA is responsive to emerging needs and issues related to the implementation of your grant efforts. They are an opportunity to share updates from Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and the TA team, and to discuss project progress, accomplishments, challenges and issues, and support needs.



RTCR Peer Group Calls

Quarterly peer group calls are beginning in January for all grantees. They represent an opportunity to participate in a facilitated learning exchange with peers based on relevant and timely topics of interest. Starting in December, grantees will have an opportunity to sign-up for the group of their choice based on a topic area.



RTCR Grantee Directory

All grantees have received a template to be completed for the directory with additional guidance and a timeline for completing it. The final compiled RTCR Grantee Directory document will provide a brief snapshot of each of the RTCR grantees in the cohort and is a useful resource for connecting and learning about other tribal programs.

NEWS ARTICLES

[COVID-19 FAQs: Dr. Daniel Barbara Responds to Questions About “Proper Mask Wearing” and the Difference Between the Seasonal Flu and COVID-19](#)

As the United States is currently experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases during flu season, this timely article details the difference between seasonal flu and COVID-19. Additionally, the article provides suggestions on when to seek care from a healthcare provider and getting the flu vaccine to assist with protection from COVID-19.

[How the COVID-19 Pandemic Has Been Curtailed in the Cherokee Nation](#)

As tribal communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, the Cherokee Nation has curbed the infection rate within their community. The article provides details on how the Cherokee Nation responded to COVID-19. In addition to the chief fully supporting public health professionals, response strategies include a mask mandate, free drive-through testing, and ensuring tribal health care workers have adequate personal protective equipment. Additionally, to protect elders from COVID-19, the nation also implemented a COVID-19 hotline for first language speakers, delivered meals, and offered all citizens over the age of 62 years a \$400 stipend to assist with virus-related expenses.

[Lack of Communication Between States and Native Tribes Hinders Contact Tracing](#)

The article highlights how the lack of communication between state and local health care systems and tribes is a hindrance to contact tracing efforts. Specifically, there is a disconnect between COVID-19 testing sites on reservations and medical facilities off site. For example, if an individual tests positive for COVID-19 outside of a tribal or Indian Health Service clinic, there is no guarantee that the reservation or tribe will receive that information. Additionally, there is no standard process for sharing contact tracing data across state lines. This is noteworthy, as many reservations span more than one state.

[Cultural Traditions Carry American Indians, Alaska Natives Through COVID-19 – and Create Risks](#)

Cultural traditions and social practices in tribal communities including multigenerational households, family gatherings, and other social gatherings have put Indigenous people at risk for contracting COVID-19. However, this article highlights how tribal leaders have also used cultural traditions to help mitigate COVID-19 within their communities. For example, tribal leaders have incorporated characters and symbols from ancient myths into public health campaigns. Additional efforts include health education initiatives, mandating curfews, and moving cultural practices to the digital world.

RESOURCES

[COVID-19 Materials Developed for Tribal Use Available from the Center for American Indian Health](#)

John Hopkins' Center for American Indian Health developed COVID-19 material for tribal communities. The one-pagers provide pertinent information for various audiences including the general public, providers, caregivers, and children. Additionally, there are tribal-specific and customizable one-pagers. Other COVID-19 material includes radio public service announcements, content for social media, and material for webinars.

[Material on COVID-19 for Tribal Communities Available from the National Indian Health Board's COVID-19 Tribal Resource Center](#)

The COVID-19 Tribal Resource Center provides a variety of material (one-pagers, infographics, videos, webinars etc.) focused on critical topics related to COVID-19 in tribal communities. Specifically, the center provides community tools, advocacy tools, resources for providers and healthcare facilities, resources created by tribes, as well as webinars on diverse topics concerning COVID-19. Additionally, the center provides a weekly COVID-19 Data Update Dashboard and list of funding opportunities for tribes.

[PDF Presentation of COVID-19 Vaccine Available on the National Indian Health Board Website](#)

This presentation, drafted by the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force within the Indian Health Service, provides information on COVID-19 statistics within the tribal community, prioritization, vaccine distribution and allocation, vaccine administration, communication, data management, safety and monitoring, and next steps.

[COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan](#)

The COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan drafted by the Indian Health Services (IHS), outlines how the IHS health care system will prepare for and operationalize a vaccine when it comes available. The plan provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of IHS Vaccine Task Force. Additionally, the plan provides guidance to all IHS Direct Services facilities, Tribal health programs, and Urban Indian Organization who choose to administer the vaccine. Guidance is provided on prioritization, vaccine distribution, ordering, and administration as well as on communication, data management, safety, and monitoring.

[Notes from the Field: Development of an Enhanced Community-Focused COVID-19 Surveillance Program – Hopi Tribe, June–July 2020](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report shares a collaboration between the Hopi Tribe Department of Health and Human Services and the Hopi Health Care Center to develop a community-focused program to enhance COVID-19 surveillance and deliver systemic health communication to communities. The report describes the surveillance program and highlights findings from two of the field tests.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Suicide Prevention Webinar Series - Responding to Suicide Clusters: Lessons Learned

Join this webinar series hosted by the Indian Health Service. This session will feature a panel discussing case examples of responding to suicide clusters in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. A suicide cluster is defined as a group of suicides or suicide attempts, or both,



that occur closer together in time and space than would normally be expected in a community. Clusters are often influenced and intensified by reports in both traditional and social media. Presenters will describe lessons learned in tailoring their response to provide the best fit for each community's unique culture, customs, and practices.

[Learn More](#)



Community of Learning: Homelessness and Housing Insecurity in the Era of COVID-19 Series

The National Council of Urban Indian Health's Technical Assistance and Research Center is hosting a community of learning series focused on homelessness and housing insecurity among urban Indigenous people during COVID-19.

Part II: Building Safe Havens for Native American Youth & Adults Through Coalition Building

Dec. 15, 2020, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

The presentation will provide information on building safe havens for homeless youth, discuss health care prevention and disease management programs for homeless youths, as well as how to engage with local organizations to build coalition networks.

Part III: Best Practices for Outreach and Referrals for Homeless Youth During COVID-19

Jan. 26, 2021, 1:00-2:00 p.m. ET

The presentation will provide information on advancing crisis planning for organizations and addressing the quality of network partners' youth services.

[Learn More](#)



Indian Health Service Urban Indian Organization Leader Call

Jan. 5, 2021, 4:00-5:00 p.m. ET

The Indian Health Service is hosting a phone conference for Urban Indian Organization leaders. Leaders will be provided with important Indian Health Service updates as well as given the opportunity to provide comments and ask federal officials questions.

Conference Number: 800-857-5577

Participant passcode: 6703929.

[Learn More](#)

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