



Important COVID-19 Information UPDATE 1/30/2021



The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Council and the SMC COVID-19 Taskforce continue to work diligently in fighting the COVID-19 Pandemic. Tribal Leadership is in constant contact with its national and state peers to advocate on behalf of not only the Tribal Membership, but members of the community and their employees for resources such as access to COVID-19 testing and COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 Testing

By networking with the National Guard of Wisconsin the Tribe increased the access to COVID-19 testing, providing testing opportunities every other week for Tribal Members, all Tribal Employees, Community Members and the general public. Task Force members have reached out to Bowler and Gresham School systems encouraging them to partake of the free public events. This partnership resulted in the Tribe providing a testing site and support staff while the National Guard provided COVID-19 test kits and personnel to administer the test. This allowed not only greater access to COVID-19 testing but decreased demand on the Stockbridge-Munsee Health & Wellness Center (SMHWC) COVID-19 Testing resources. The SMHWC was and is also able to continue normal operations during the COVID-19 testing events thus not disrupting services to patients.

The most significant benefit of the Tribe's robust COVID-19 testing program was identifying multiple COVID-19 positive cases who were totally unaware they were infected with the virus. They showed absolutely no symptoms.

Contract Tracing

The Tribal Council allocated resources to contact tracing efforts which have proven to be critical in reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This became extremely important when Shawano County couldn't continue with their contact tracing. To date the Tribe has four Contact Tracers; with the goal to hire two more.

The role of the Contact Tracers is to get positive patients into quarantine as quickly as possible. They also contact trace all direct and close contacts of the positive individual thus stopping the spread of the virus among employees and family members in households.

Contact Tracers also monitor quarantined and isolated patients' health as they progress through the virus. The most important result of this initiative is the lives saved when patients were unsure if they should be seeking further medical help and Contact Tracers were able to assess and advise them to seek emergency medical care.

Vaccination

Tribal Nations were given two options for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine; to receive the vaccine from the State or from I.H.S. (Indian Health Services). The decision had to be made by October 30, 2020.

Based on the following information the Tribal Council chose to receive vaccine from I.H.S. I.H.S. provided more information on the vaccination development and distribution process than the State. The Bemidji region has an officer on the vaccination distribution planning team at Health & Human Services office. IHS has shared their draft plan with Tribe. IHS works closely with McKesson, the selected COVID-19 vaccination distributor and has a contract with McKesson for IHS medication distribution.

Additionally, the Tribe was required to submit a distribution plan at the time they identified their vaccination source. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) provided a master plan that prioritized populations to receive vaccinations in phases.

In December of 2020 the Tribal Council authorized a COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Priorities and Plan (the Plan). The Plan uses a phased approach for vaccine distribution based on the amount of vaccine available and prioritized need for the vaccine. The full-distribution plan is posted on the Tribes webpage under the COVID-19 updates.

The Plan has four phases: Phase 1-A, 1-B, Phase 2, and Phase 3.

Phase 1A covers Healthcare Workers, EMS, Ella Besaw residents and staff, and Occupational Health

Phase 1B covers essential employees and active patients of record at the clinic with documented health risks.

Phase 2 covers enrolled members by age groups, household members, and employees

Phase 3 covers all who have a connection to the community

Please see visit the Tribal Web page: www.mohican.com COVID-19 Updates to see the full plan. To date the Stockbridge-Munsee Health & Wellness Center administered vaccines to 495 people.

On January 15, 2021, Wisconsin State Governor Tony Evers announced a new mobile COVID-19 vaccination program. Networking with Wisconsin Nation Guard and the University of Wisconsin System his goal is to increase vaccine access and get as many people vaccinated as quickly, safely, and equitable as possible.

The Tribal Council and the Task Force are networking with the State to explore the possibility of our community becoming a site for a rural vaccination center. The Tribe is in the preliminary planning stages to determine logistically how to make that happen. If this is successful it will give not only the Tribal Members and Community more access to vaccines but the general rural public in our area, as well.

There has been some hesitation in receiving the vaccination. The Tribe will be collecting information to determine how many Tribal Members and their household members are willing to receive the vaccine or have already received the vaccine. All Tribal Members are welcomed to complete a survey for their household. Please go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SMHWC-COVID-19>

Should you need help completing the survey please call 715-793-4111 from Monday to Thursday 8:15 am to 3:30 pm central time.