

**Bemidji Area Indian Health Service – White Earth Service Unit
Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee
FY2022 1st Quarter Report
July through September 2021**

Area Tribal Representatives:
Kathy Goodwin
District II Representative
White Earth Reservation Tribal Council
DSTAC Secretary

Federal Liaison:
Dr. Chris Poole,
BAO Director of Tribal and Urban Services
Agency Lead Negotiator

Goal 1: To ensure that comprehensive, culturally appropriate personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people

White Earth:

During this quarter, we had 24,280 visits during this quarter (July – September 2021), a 1,732 increase from the previous quarter as we experienced a significant decrease in the demand for testing and respiratory visits due to vaccination rates in the adult population.

The Incident Command Team (ICT) structure re-activated August 2, 2021 due to another surge in Covid-19 infections and exposures. As such, Covid-19 testing vaccination remains in place as does our vaccination efforts for persons 12 years old and up.

Medical, Dental, Optometry, Pharmacy, Lab and other ancillary services were 100% fully operational during this quarter along with the re-opening of the Naytahwaush Health Clinic on May 4, 2021. On-site CT and MRI services resumed these services since December 2020. Telehealth visits continue for continuity of care. These alternative methods in the delivery of healthcare remain in place to allow patients to continue their treatment plans. Telephone or telehealth visits remain an option for patients and providers. The following information provides data that reflects some of the operational changes within the White Earth Service Unit.

1. There were 134 new patients registered during this quarter in comparison to 304 for the previous quarter.
2. This quarter there were 9,971 provider visits (medical, dental, optometry) compared to 10,080 provider visits the previous quarter. However, there were 9,899 Pharmacy Primary Care visits this quarter.
3. Implemented Pharmacy Primary Care Clinic on 9/18/221. The PPCC is an extension of the Medication Therapy Management clinic where a pharmacist was relocated from the pharmacy to the main clinic to dedicate time to the MTM consults and build the pharmacy-based comprehensive clinic model. The PPCC pharmacist is also more accessible to the providers for medication questions, ad hoc patient education and/or medication reconciliation, and assistance with hospital discharge medication reconciliation reviews.

	# of patients	# of visits	# of interventions	# of referrals received	% change in HgbA1c
Q1 FY21	57	125	76*	52	-1.3%
Q2 FY21	63	152	139	56	-1.7%
Q3 FY21	72	152	174	61	-1.1%
Q4 FY21	68	188	134	38	-1.6%

The Naytauwaush Joint Venture Project mentioned in Goal 2 will provide more comprehensive services the current NTW Health Center is lacking; such as Pharmacy drive thru services, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and Radiology, to name just a few.

Tribal Interactions:

4. IHS/Tribal meetings occur every Friday with the Tribal Health Administrator yet the tribal and IHS collaboration is daily.

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5. The CEO, WESU, participates on the White Earth tribal RBC meeting each month via in-person or a written report is provided when the CEO is unable to attend. The CEO is in regular contact with the White Earth Tribe's Elder Council and the Tribal Health Director for any operational changes and issues that come up. One RBC member shares email correspondence from the CEO concerning PRC issues on her personal Facebook page.
6. Construction for the NTW Joint Venture Project began in July. It is a \$17 Million clinic project creating an additional 34,000 sf of healthcare space.
7. The White Earth tribe completed its renovation of the Rice Lake Community Center to accommodate both IHS and the Tribal Health Department operations. In August 2020, it was agreed that IHS would provide medical services one day a week. The CEO and Area OEHE complete two MOUs – one for services agreement and the other for the lease of the space. The Tribal Health Department will pay for the lease of this space. Services at Rice Lake were tentatively scheduled to open October 2021 but staff shortages have delayed the opening for an undetermined amount of time.

Red Lake:

- Walk-in Clinic Services established with Grand Opening in April 2021. A total of 1150 visits (30% increase compared to last) were completed during 4th QTR FY 21 (in addition to an increase in Emergency Department visits) as an indicator of increased access. Two tribal APRNs are currently staffing this new service. Walk-in Clinic added as an extension of OPD PCMH team.
- Telemedicine Expansion pilot project created to evaluate opportunities to expand telehealth services to include synchronous visits. Hardware was ordered and the site has enrolled as a pilot test site in the HQ telemedicine platform. Tele-behavioral health services for substance use disorder and co-occurring behavioral health conditions in the detention setting will be the first care area.
- Collaborated with Red Lake Comprehensive Health Service to expand rehabilitation services to include Occupational Therapy and Speech therapy for inpatient skilled nursing capacity and expanded integrated pain management in outpatient physical therapy. Full implementation is pending with priority in inpatient.
- Revised COVID-19 Pandemic Surge Plan to address Emergency Department left without being seen rates and extended length of service. Submitted a VHA Intra-agency Agreement for staffing augmentation to support acute care activities. Expanded access to monoclonal antibody treatment with infusion capacity of six patients per day.
- Expanded the Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) pharmacist collaborative practice agreement to include patient withdrawal assessments and team-based care for the medical management of office-based buprenorphine induction.
- The Hospital continues representation on four tribal Community Opioid Response team committees to address the 200% increase in opioid overdoses and alarming increases in mortality events compared to pre-pandemic levels.
- In collaboration with Comprehensive Health Services, the Hospital implemented expanded Harm Reduction services to include contact-less syringe exchange and naloxone. Fentanyl test kits have been added to these kits and community education is ongoing.
- Drafted a simulated rate quote agreement with the Northern Dental Access Clinic to expand access to dental services during dental staffing crisis. The Tribe is supporting placement of a MSA and one additional dental assistant.
- Ongoing continued collaboration with tribe to purchase and design a Mobile Medical Unit to provide preventative services in the community. The clinic will also support opioid harm reduction services, restore community access to syringe exchange services, support the delivery of women's health services in community settings, and equip for mobile dental services. Final anticipated vehicle delivery date October 2021

Cass Lake:

Following a significant increase in COVID-19 positivity rates, Cass Lake Service Unit (CLSU) resumed its incident command structure on August 9, 2021.

8. The COVID testing hotline and drive-thru testing were once again deployed on September 13, 2021. Daily, one care team is assigned to screen and test patients according to CDC guidelines. From September 13th through September 30th, 904 tests have been administered with the majority of them utilizing this drive-thru service.

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9. The CLSU continues regular communications and meetings with Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) Health Director and Director of Nursing resulting in collaborations between our healthcare organizations which have been critical in response to COVID -19.
10. CLSU reinstated monoclonal antibody infusions Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Realizing an increase in demand for this therapy, CLSU requested assistance from the LLBO Health Division to increase access to the infusion from 2 days per week to 3-4 days weekly. Over the course of 17 days, 20 doses were administered to high risk patients.
11. A collaboration between the LLBO Health Division and CLSU staff resulted in 450 flu and 306 COVID vaccines given during two mass events. Future events are planned. All vaccines continue to be offered upon patient request or staff recommendation. As of September 30, 85% of CLSU user population over 18 years of age were vaccinated with COVID-19 (3573/4185).
12. As available beds in the region decline with rising numbers of COVID cases, CLSU and Red Lake Hospital have combined nursing resources to increase access to lower acuity beds for our patients. Ensuring adequate staffing provides a safe patient care environment.
13. CLSU continues to support Leech Lake Caring Partners to address suicidality in the community. The team is working to develop a post-vention strategy for patients, community, and staff impacted by suicide.
14. CLSU, Red Lake Hospital, and Sanford will work together on a HRSA Maternity Health Grant awarded September 2021.
15. Operation Walking Shield Mission took place August 3-August 12, 2021. During the 10 day mission, 55 soldiers, 2 USPHS Officers, and 5 civilians provided direct patient care that impacted more than 700 patients. Outcomes are listed below:
 - Veterinary staff completed 80 spay/neuters and vaccinated over 360 pets at no cost to pet owners. Several staff also traveled to five outlying communities on the Leech Lake Reservation to increase access to veterinary care.
 - CAPT Robert Chelberg, USPHS, optometrist from the Menominee Indian Tribal Clinic, was the star of the mission. He cross-trained 4 soldiers to assist with eye exams that he alone provided for 289 patients. He also trained soldiers to fabricate 160 pairs of glasses, provided at no cost to the patient, in an on-site optical lab.
 - The dental department evaluated and treated 295 patients where they pulled over 295 teeth and filled just as many cavities. Their care increased access to much needed dental care for the underserved communities of northern Minnesota.
 - Leech Lake Health Division staff administered 15 COVID vaccines during the mission.
 - Forty patients received mental health services.
 - Heather Zimmel, AuD, Bemidji Area, provided hearing screening and referred where appropriate for 17 individuals.
 - Seventy sports physicals were completed for Minnesota High School athletes.
 - Eight soldiers completed ride-alongs with the Leech Lake Ambulance Service.
16. The CLSU hosted a collaborative meeting with Sanford Emergency Department and Inpatient leadership to address concerns and improve quality of care, communication, and transfers.
17. The CLSU recently hired a new Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Andrew Lankowicz, filling a critical leadership position for the organization. Dr. Anosh Mazarhi, a long term contract physician, was recently hired as full time permanent physician on the Blue Care Team. Additionally, the facility continues to hire additional staff in the purchased referred care department to assist with processing patient referrals and claims; and nursing and registration staff to fill important vacancies in the facility and improving efficiencies and access to care.

Goal 2: To promote excellence and quality through innovation of the Indian health system into an optimally performing organization

White Earth:

The White Earth Service Unit initiated a 38,000 sq. ft. expansion project to provide further access to care, including but not limited to a drive through pharmacy refill lane, larger physical and occupational therapy department, a dental suite and larger primary care departments. Included in this expansion project are five areas of the existing facility slated for renovation. The 38,000 sq. ft. expansion project continues to progress with a tentative/partial move-in date around set for January 2022 for dental, pharmacy and PT/OT – this is far beyond this initial move in date of August 17, 2021. Severe delays have been experienced by the construction contractor.

As mentioned above, construction on the NTW Joint Venture is well underway. The Joint Venture project offers additional services the current NTW Health Center is lacking; such as Pharmacy drive thru services, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and

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Radiology, to name just a few. As a result of increased services, the third party revenue acquired from it will not only further support self-sustaining health care programs but also lower health care costs overall. Conceptually, as more patients are able to seek care, the need to seek emergent care is reduced.

White Earth GPRA Report for FY 2021: 19/26 Measures Met. Of the 19 GPRA measures, WESU far exceeded the goal. The 7 measures not met were poor glycemic control (short 15 patients), flu for 6 month-17 years (short 89 patients); Flu 18+ (short 291 patients); Pap smear rates 24-64 (short 40 patients); Mammogram rates (short 3 patients); controlling High BP; childhood weight (increased) (short 10 patients).

Red Lake:

1. Primary Care Medical Home (PCMH): formally establishing PCMH status within Outpatient Department. Finalized two PCMH policies. Focused milestones and timelines created to address identified programmatic gaps. Accreditation open window 01 November.
2. Whole Health Initiative: secured contract award to host a two-day Whole Health peer-lead intervention training. Thirty (30) staff from community service providers and hospital staff will be rostered to attend.
3. Critical Access Hospital: continued Performance Improvement Team and Charter to meet CAH requirements. Application submitted to Medicare MAC with letter of intent for conversion submitted to state. Swing bed implementation and EHR set-up is on-going.

Cass Lake:

- The CLSU, in partnership with the LLBO, is nearing the completion of the design of the Phase 2.2 expansion, which includes a new building allowing for expansion of the Dental, Clinic, PT / OT, Optometry, Audiology, and Radiology Departments. This project is currently funded in excess of \$30M in NEF funding and other sources for the construction of the Phase 2 Building Plan and is incorporated into the Public Law 638 Construction Contract as well. This design started in 2019, but was put on hold during much of 2020 in response to Covid-19. This design has resumed in 2021. Additional progress this quarter included the installation of a temporary office building planned for occupancy this year as well as the design and bid for temporary radiology department which is planned to be installed by the end of 2021. This will allow for X-ray and Mammography to continue onsite during the construction and further allows for full construction to begin in 2022.
- Due to significant nurse staffing shortages, CLSU and Red Lake Service Unit combined resources to support inpatient care at the Red Lake Service Unit.
- CLSU Rehabilitation Services, in collaboration with LLBO Education and Health Division Departments, supports the Occupational Therapy Assistant located at the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School.
- PRC Departmental corrective action plan is actively being resolved with development of processes, workflows, and protocols for day-to-day administrative, finance, clinical, and acquisition components of the program. A contracted medical support assistant (MSA) was hired by IHS to serve as the point of contact for the Payer of Last Resort (POLR). The PRC health system specialist and MSA continue to collaborate with LLBO and the third party administrator, Blue Link-Blue Cross Blue Shield. The department's staffing is currently at 67% to include three permanent full-time MSAs, additionally three full-time contracted MSAs, and one acting supervisory health system specialist are assisting this corrective action. Two new MSA positions, one RN case manager, and one program analyst positions are in the process of being created. The backlogs for Sanford are 95% complete. Self-referrals, transfers, and hospital admissions represents 30% of the workload. A projected \$4 to \$5 million in PRC funding will be made available after the undelivered purchased orders have been reviewed and cancelled for 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 fiscal years.
- Accreditation & Primary Care Medical Home (PCMH): PCMH preparation and discussion are now incorporated into the regular outpatient meetings allowing the key players attend this meeting and collaborate on this preparation. Empanelment, Health literacy, and SMG remain the focus at this time.
- Preparations are ongoing for the upcoming 2021 Joint Commission Laboratory Survey. Quality department staff attend accreditation & certification huddle series weekly to stay current on accreditation processes and any upcoming changes.

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- The Quality Manager, Acting Clinical Director, and PATH partners attend the Rural Population Health Community Collaborative meetings- Leading and organizing in action with the focus of collaborating with community partners to improve rural health.

Goal 3: To strengthen IHS program management and operations

White Earth:

Current offering three COVID-19 vaccines at WESU.

- Starting 6/7/21, patients may request COVID-19 vaccine “on-demand” without being previously scheduled.
- If patients call and are interested in receiving COVID-19 vaccine we are scheduling Monday – Friday.

Several planning meetings for opening Pine Point clinic and move into the WESU Expansion were held this past quarter with various departments as they plan their move into the expansion. Several new pieces of lab, dental and medical equipment have been purchased and installed at White Earth, NTW, Pine Point, and Rice Lake.

The Dental Department is currently preparing for a significant upgrade to Dentrix 8.0.09 which requires a significant amount of staff training. The Dental Clinic will need to be closed for at least 5 days for all staff training. Patients will be referred out for dental emergencies. The Tiny Teeth Project remains active for integrating oral health into prenatal practice and began its outreach to tribal Head Start programs in Naytahwaush and Pine Point communities in March 2021 and will begin again starting in October.

WESU initiated project to acquire a Physician Recruiting Contract to recruit for full-time permanent hire physicians, dentists and pediatricians. This has since grown to an Area-wide effort to benefit all three service units within the BAIHS.

Red Lake:

- IT network modernization contract awarded. This project will restore terminal services, restore EHR access in exam rooms, create virtual services capacity to deploy eCQM, and create a disaster recovery appliance. The project interdependencies include secure wireless access points and renovation of the existing server closet.
- Access Control Update. This project includes migration of the electronic surveillance system to a new server, installation of additional cameras, and an upgrade to the proximity key card system. This enhancement will address previously identified security concerns.

Cass Lake:

- Management continues to work closely with Human Resources to improve employee recruitment and retention. The facility continues to offer retention incentives to retain high performing employees during a healthcare staffing shortage. Additionally, contracts remain in place to provide nursing, lab, and medical support assistant staffing while the permanent positions are filled. A Physician and Dentist placement service contract is planned to be awarded in the upcoming months to assist with recruitment of these critical vacancies to further increase access to care.
- The number of employees recognized by their colleagues this quarter for outstanding work and customer service were: July-40; Aug-18; Sept-29. Employees are also nominated for employee of the month. Employee of the Month winners are reviewed for Employee of the Quarter in an effort to recognize and reward our high performing staff.
- Adult patients who present to CLSU are able to receive vaccines upon request from pharmacy and nursing staff.
- The COVID Testing Staff ensure COVID-19 testing meets CDC guidelines conserving resources. Patients receive education on quarantine and isolation practices as part of the testing process.
- Continued to collaborate with LLBO Health Division, MDH and Cass County to complete contact tracing for COVID patients on the Leech Lake Reservation.
- Safety concerns are entered into I-STAR and reviewed regularly by a multidisciplinary committee to provide recommendations utilizing Just Culture processes that improve systems and promote efficiency.

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- All patient concerns for the facility are reviewed by the appropriate department and a follow up with the concerned patient or patient representative to address the immediate issue. The results of these concerns are reviewed further by Department, Quality Improvement Committee, and CEO to look for trends and implement changes that improve patient and customer satisfaction.
- All new employees are provided a comprehensive orientation to the facility and Leech Lake Area and annual training for the Cass Lake service unit. Just Culture training is included in this orientation and annual trainings. The Just Culture model utilized in I-STAR review and completion.
- The CLSU continues to review the results of the Community Health Needs Assessment and Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) “Survey on Patient Safety Culture”. The CLSU is collaborating with PATH partners to prioritize top needs and priorities to implement improvement strategies

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