

**Portland Area
Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee
FY2022 2nd Quarter Report
October- December 2021**

Area Tribal Representatives: Greg Abrahamson	Federal Liaison: Rena Macy
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Goal 1: To ensure that comprehensive, culturally appropriate personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people

Yakama: The Yakama Service Unit hosted a Nursing Student who provided assistance in the vaccination clinic. This was under an agreement with the Heritage University, Toppenish, WA. This agreement with a local university will assist in awareness of the Yakama Service Unit as a potential employer and career location. The Yakama Service Unit has continued the residency program with Emily Castle as the current Pharmacist Resident. She has provided service in medication dispensing, vaccinations, and in Medication Assisted Therapy for COVID-19 patients.

The Yakama Service Unit hosted (3) pharmacy students who provided assistance in the pharmacy and with the pharmacy vaccination clinic.

The Yakama Service Unit has coordinated with the Portland Area Office to receive the support and assistance of deployed Commissioned Officer teams. This has assisted greatly in the ability of the service unit to respond to COVID cases in the quarter, continue offering vaccinations and in maintaining access to care for our patients. November-December team of (6); December-January team of (5). The following work and support with travel arrangements by Christi Lemieux is greatly appreciated, and the work to onboard the staff by Amber Terry.

Warm Springs: Warm Springs Service Unit continues to work toward increased access in the midst of this pandemic. Our goal is to improve access to care by transitioning a large part of our virtual visits to face to face visits in the coming months. We have also begun work to modify our patient scheduling to include 50% open access for same day appointments, while the other 50% are pre-scheduled appointments. Our scheduling improvement work is in the early phase of testing as we work to balance our scheduling system to meet the community needs and expectation.

Chemawa: Chemawa is committed to recruiting and retaining quality staff. The Western Oregon Service Unit is proud to announce the hiring of two Environmental Services (EVS) staff. Their contributions to our facilities' team have already made a positive impact to the clinic. Currently, WOSU is recruiting for a new Director of Nursing, two Clinical Nurses, Dental Assistant, and a Staff Educator.

WOSU's commitment to the Chemawa community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is at the highest level. WOSU clinical services have all returned to full access operational status. With the return of the Chemawa Indian School (CIS) students, WOSU staff are working to meet the needs of both the CIS students and community patients. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, WOSU has maintained a COVID Incident Command System. This team has led the response to continue providing screening to all staff and patients prior to services. Symptomatic patients have access to testing at the clinic, as well as home testing kits that can be provided to family members. Patients with known or suspected infectious disease now can be seen in our new negative pressure isolation room. As a priority to keep our Chemawa community safe, WOSU has focused on community vaccination and clinical care. The Chemawa Indian School leadership provided collaboration in establishing the CIS gym as a mass vaccination location. This partnership has allowed Chemawa to provide over 5,959 COVID vaccines and boosters to all eligible patients. Chemawa continues to offer Moderna, Pfizer, and Janssen vaccines. Currently, 68% of WOSU eligible patients and 95% of WOSU staff are fully vaccinated. The team works to encourage vaccination and will continue to support this critical step in ending the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Chemawa leadership is excited to announce the completion of their dental renovation. This renovation includes a new dental laboratory, sterilization room and updated countertops. This will drastically improve infection prevention measures and modernize WOSU's Dental department.

Wellpinit: The Wellpinit Service Unit was successful in hiring additional Schedule A staff including a contract tracer and 2 door screeners. They have had a very successful relationship with Native Arc locum agency with two NPs coming on board and arriving soon. These staff will help with primary care and Covid tent activities. There was also a PHS deployment which was beneficial for provider coverage.

They Wellpinit Service Unit was successful in continuing agreements for FNP students, collaborations with the STOI Headstart program and the expansion of MH/Substance Abuse Pharmaceutical access. Wellpinit also received a renewed AAAHC accreditation and completed their CAP to address any of the concerns noted in the survey.

The WSU Reconstitution Plan submitted and approved. Primary care and dental services are fully restored, with close monitoring of COVID activity. Door Screener remains posted at single patient access point. Every patient is screened prior to entry, positive findings are sent to the COVID tent for screening/testing prior to entry into the clinic.

Curbside pharmacy refill service will continue thru pandemic. 90 day refills remain in effect to reduce potential exposure risks.

COVID tent remains fully operational, both daily testing and vaccines are scheduled, with drive thru vaccines (both COVID and Flu) available on Thursday mornings, for patients 18 years and older. Scheduled appointments are encouraged for 5-17 year olds Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

Home COVID tests are generously distributed – and coordinated with TANF, EMS, and Wellpinit School, as well as at clinic entrance, curbside pickup. More than 125 home tests were distributed in the past week. Lab CLS monitors ordering and supply with NSSC.

Ft. Hall: The Fort Hall Service Unit (FHSU) continues to operate in a modified environment with Incident Command in place supporting our COVID-19 response. Our Reconstitution Plan was approved and will be implemented in accordance with local pandemic activity levels. Our drive-through COVID-19 testing continues, as does visitor limitations/screening, curbside pharmacy pick-up, and some limitations on dental services. Telehealth is offered where appropriate, but otherwise medical clinical services remain unaffected. Home test kits are available to the community in addition to providing Binax Now testing supplies to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

We volunteered to be and were selected for the initial deployments of both Evusheld and Paxlovid. Evusheld is being distributed in similar fashion to the initial rollout of the vaccines, first being offered to those immunocompromised individuals working in healthcare and essential functions followed by distribution to the highest priority of immunocompromised patients not working in high-risk environments (active chemotherapy, solid organ transplant recipients, etc.). The FHSU pharmacy is providing in-service training to providers and nursing staff on both agents.

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Overall, the COVID-19 response on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation has been an extraordinary collaborative effort. The three clinical entities on the reservation – the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Health and Human Services Department (THHS), the Shoshone-Bannock Community Health Center (a FQHC locally known as the “HRSA Clinic”) and the Indian Health Service Fort Hall Service Unit (FHSU) united together with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal Office of Emergency Management to form a Unified Incident Command Team (UIC). Working with additional partners from the Idaho Office of Emergency Management (IOEM), Idaho National Guard (ING), Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW), Idaho Public Health District 6 (PHD6), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), and the Indian Health Service (IHS), we have achieved things none of us could have ever hoped for at the start of the pandemic.



Provided 100% of the COVID-19 nurse case management for the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, calling high risk patients multiple times and each patient at least 1-2 times during isolation (total of 278 patients).

Make available telephone visits with patients in Medical as appropriate.

Despite being at only 50% staffing for our dental assisting team and having half of the provider team diverted to COVID-19 response, the Fort Hall Service Unit dental team continued to provide dental services to the community. This included on-site dental screenings, fluoride varnish, oral hygiene instruction, and nutritional education to 78 Head Start children at the Tribal Early Learning Center.

Coordinated seven after hours children’s vaccine events with THHS, focusing on both COVID-19 and catch-up childhood immunizations. Generated new patient education materials for families that included immunization schedules. Those were distributed both at community locations and sent home with children from the schools on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

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Continued to provide Binax ID Now testing supplies and hazardous waste disposal to the Tribal community COVID-19 testing program, resulting in 4,593 tests in the community during this quarter.

Even with backlogs and overall clinic staffing shortages, employees' help with COVID-19 related activities outside of their regular duties such as pharmacy curb side services and screening of patients.

Housekeeping continues to maintain disinfecting at the 300% increase of high contact areas throughout the FHSU due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lab continues to provide routine lab testing as well as drive through Covid-19 testing for symptomatic patients. The IHS lab is working closely with the local and state health departments for sequence testing to better identify variants of Covid-19 with in the community.

Colville: Colville Service Unit has been utilizing Locums and Commissioned Corp to assist with staffing this year, which often requires additional orientation teaching providers about the tribe, its operations, its land, and its language and how the health care clinics work in the four districts.

Daily collaboration with tribe and all 4 clinics is needed to manage covid operations including testing, vaccination, contact tracing, and communication to the community members.

Colville did a large boost vaccination event with the tribal employee workforce and provided on site vaccinations with tribal convalescent center staff and residents. The clinic staff also worked with headstart staff on pediatric doses. There was also work with the detention facility and local daycares for vaccination and testing.

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

Yakama:

Three dentists of the Yakama Service Unit attended a training session by the WA State ABCD program. The program connects low-income families with dentists, and focuses on prevention and avoiding tooth decay. This training was to provide an update on prevention and helping young patients avoid tooth decay. It was a good training opportunity for the latest hired dentists (2) regarding care for children.

GPRA measures have been a challenge under the environment of and focus on COVID-19. As such, the GPRA Team of the service unit conducted a "GPRA School" training November 18th. This was a means to train newly hired staff, and to update existing staff on the aspects of GPRA. The training was made available online as well for staff to review.

A "Catch-Up Childhood Immunizations" clinic was run on December 2nd in the afternoon during the administrative hours of the clinic at that time. It provided further access to patients for childhood immunizations. Additionally, vaccinations are offered during regular clinic hours Monday-Friday.

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Warm Springs: The Warm Springs Service Unit is working on a quality improvement effort to reduce the number of day it takes to process a recruitment action from notice of expected vacancy to completion of a SU recruitment action in the HR EHCM system. It is our goal to have the SU recruitment action completed within 10-15 days of official notice that an employee will be vacating their position. By establishing an efficient and effective process at the local level, we believe the Area Office HR support will have all of the recruitment information required to provide timely and efficient classification, staffing announcements and overall turn-around from vacancy to EOD of new hire.

Chemawa: Chemawa continues to set the bar high with quality and innovations. The WOSU Quality Management Team is currently partnering with the Portland Area in deploying a quality platform for all improvement projects in process at the local level. These projects can be followed by leadership and shared with other sites within the Portland Area. The Chemawa team prides itself in leading by five core values, while recognizing staff each quarter exemplifying these mission driven qualities: respect, learning, trust, compassion, and willingness. The resiliency of this Chemawa team during the COVID-19 pandemic is unparalleled. This quarter, WOSU supported the deployment of four Public Health Service (PHS) officers who were called upon.

Wellpinit: At WSU the Patient Experience Specialist and the Business Office Manager are involved in an Area Wide Family of Measures Improvement project focused on reviewing/revising the Family of Measures and how they are reported to the Governing Board. The Patient Experience Specialist also completed all of her HIP PDSA's for HIP certification.

Ongoing collaboration between Wellpinit School staff and students to extend COVID vaccines, testing and contact tracing guidance. The school partnered with the state to offer Test to Stay COVID protocol. The clinic assists with home testing, and extensive guidance.

Waste water testing – Dr. Weiser and A-CEO met with Tribal Council in December to present benefits of waste water testing. Tribal Council unanimously agreed to engage, the Tribal Planning Director will continue to work with OEHE to deploy services. The Planning Director and clinic representative will collaborate to present date in terms of waste water positivity and clinic positivity rates.

Ft. Hall: Successfully passed on-site COLA survey, enabling us to maintain laboratory certification for another 2 years.

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Pictured from left to right: Merrick Cowdell, Laboratory Technician; Alicia Wrablik, Lab Supervisor; Sandra Osborn, COLA Surveyor and Dr. James Vook, Clinical Lab Supervisor

In recognition of our excellence in clinical case management, clinical leadership was invited to present our case management process for high-risk cardiac and diabetic patients in a rural environment as part of a CMS Million Hearts CME webinar.

Participated in the Portland IHS Area Committee to improve patient concern forms for the Patient Experience Program.

Electronic Health Record (EHR) Clinical Applications Coordinator (CAC) coordinated training with Tribal Health staff to run reports.

Started process for requesting electronic prescribing (e-scribe) of prescriptions. Medication files were standardized and updated to fit universal formatting of medication names for e-scribe.

Facilities continues to maintain all building inspections, deployment of drills and follow-ups as needed.

All staff trained through Stericycle on HAZCOM and fulfilled other required Indian Health Service trainings.

Colville: Colville's big improvement project is around the PRC program with multiple meetings a week to address the charters and PDSA's. Work included revision of FAQ and patient communication letters regarding PRC eligibility. A tracking log is also used to track and address referrals that have eligibility issues so that they can be resolved during the 30 day bridge. Additional work started on tracking ER visits and eligibility to ensure that ER visits are brought to committee in a timely manner.

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Goal 3: To strengthen IHS program management and operations

Yakama: The Yakama Service Unit has hired the following positions who reported as team members this quarter:

- Clinical Pharmacist - LCDR Adele Davis
- Pharmacist - Lindsey Fulton (Schedule A)
- Pharmacist - Anna Fontaine (Schedule A)
- Pharmacy Technician - Crystal Corona
- Physician - Dr. Jennifer Brindle (Schedule A)
- Supervisory Clinical Laboratory Scientist – Larvingo Alston
- Clinical Lab Scientist – Douglas Miller
- Health Technician – Nellie Eyle (Schedule A)
- Billing Technician - Afton Smith
- Medical Support Assistant - Lennette Palomarez (Schedule A)
- Support Position - Mariah Thompson (Schedule A)
- Support Position - Aliyah Cardenas (Schedule A)

The coordination and work by CAPT Mark Iseri, Amber Terry, and Marsha Tanner, Portland Area is greatly appreciated.

Starting in November, the Yakama Service Unit, moved respiratory/triage/COVID testing operations from outside to inside the facility using the East Wing of the clinic. The East Wing has a separate outside access door, and all (6) exam rooms in the wing are equipped with negative airflow systems. This has enabled staff to work within a controlled environment and maintain separation of respiratory patients and well appointments.

Starting the first week in January, the service unit changed back to general operating hours of the clinic to have the clinic open on Thursday afternoons. The clinic Administrative hours returned to Thursday mornings. This change was made as outside operations were moved indoors. The prior operating hours in the morning were in consideration of extreme summer weather. It was noted that patient visits to Pharmacy were at a higher volume in the afternoon as opposed to the morning on Thursdays.

Warm Springs: In December, the SU and Joint Health Commission met for their regular quarterly business. The SU reported on progress toward its effort to complete the design phase of our Modernization phase 1 project that includes new space for Primary Care and Pharmacy. This project will allow the SU to strengthen program management and operations by co-locating care teams in a modern and more patient centered environment.

Chemawa: The Chemawa team continues to focus on streamlining processes that support program management. The WOSU Executive Administrative Assistant is the local point of contact for Human Resources. The addition of this role at the service unit has been a great resource to staff, management, and new recruits. They have worked hard to develop the program into a process that meets the needs of our team to provide direct patient care.

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This quarter, many of the WOSU staff participated in a Contracting Officer Representative (COR) training by the Portland Area Office. Led by the WOSU DCEO, Chemawa is working on the development of a local COR program to improve the oversight of local contracts and services at WOSU. Currently, Chemawa has two COR level-2 managers and six COR level-1 members on this team. The team is collaborating on a comprehensive process to assure that these contracts are at the highest level. The commitment of these individuals to complete the training, manage their contracts, and collaborate will positively impact the services that we provide.

Wellpinit: The acting CEO continues to meet weekly with the Spokane Tribal Business Council for covid updates and also colobarates to provide messaging for the Spokane Tribal email/texting systems, the tribal newspaper, Rawhide Press via social media and print version.

Facility improvements have been identified and started with completion slated for the upcoming year. These include a system for standby backup power for refrigerators and freezers in the med room, lab and pharmacy, Medical Records HVAC Reconfiguration to meet IMC guidelines, and Lab redesign and updating.

IT updates remain a priority. The Spokane Indian Reservation wireless project is still in progress. Internet bandwidth remains limited for patients. WSU is working with PAO on area wireless project - the equipment is ordered and slated for arrival in June 2022. Other work slated includes RPMS server upgrades. The Voice and data routers were replaced and new switches were added to the network which added an additional 96 ports for additional workspace. New copier workstations were also installed adding scan to email capability. New local group policies were implemented, to maximize IT time, and reduce staff interruption. IT able to make changes at own workstation, rather than going to each desktop individually

Ft. Hall: Recruited new advanced practice provider to our team and interviewed candidates for a second AP provider position.

Staff maintain a good working relationship with outside facilities to transfer and receive patient medical records. Staff also ensure that documents needed for patient care are accessible, organized and complete.

Monthly coordination of care meeting set up by Tribal Health Community Health Services with home health agency to improve information sharing and patient care services provided between Tribes, IHS, and home health agency. There are weekly meeting between THHS and IHS regarding COVID-19 community testing, testing supplies and testing strategies. Daily correspondence between THHS and IHS regarding COVID positivity numbers, and data analyst on prevalence, distribution patterns and disease prevention.

Continued efforts with PAO on service unit projections:

1. Renovation of Public and Employee Bathrooms
2. Lighting Survey-upgrading to LED lighting
3. Building Structure support for the Laboratory analyzer
4. Front Entry Way- Canopy Style and Landscaping of the Entrance area

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5. Upgrading of Boiler system
6. Backup Generator for Refrigerated/frozen Reagents and vaccines

Colville: The Business Office Manager from Chemawa has been assisting the Colville Service Unit with process improvements, policy creation, staff roles/responsibilities and training for staff in the Business Office. Colville has also used this person to serve as a subject matter expert in filling crucial positions. The team also created a new page 8 format to improve communication between departments and ensure that is up to date and organized.

Colville is also working on improvements for the HVAC system to improve operations and prepare for summer heat waves. Work is expected to be completed next quarter.

The Service Unit was very excited to hire a new purchasing agent which will improve the SU's ability to purchase needed equipment, and contracts.