

Virtual Home Visiting available during COVID-19 pandemic

Have you been thinking about utilizing the Home Visiting Program but have concerns about someone coming to your home due to COVID? No worries! We can do virtual visits.

During this COVID season we are not meeting in the home or office. We can meet by phone, FaceTime, Google Duo or the like. When weather permits we can meet outside if you prefer, following all the safety protocols of wearing masks and staying six feet apart.

So who is Home Visiting for?

We serve Siletz Tribal families who are expecting a baby or have a baby less

than 1 year of age, continuing until the child is 3 years old. Our Family Spirit curriculum, developed by the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, is evidence-based and culturally sensitive to Native families.

Some of the goals are to increase parenting knowledge and skills; promote optimal physical, cognitive and social/emotional development for children birth to 3 years; prepare children for early school success; link families to community services to address specific needs; and promote parents' and children's life skills and behavioral outcomes across the life span.

Bottom line – we want to help provide parenting and life skills for you to have a successful and positive parenting experience.

For more information, contact Jessica Hibler, 477-SSP coordinator 1/home visitor covering Eugene and surrounding areas, at 541-484-4234 (Eugene Area Office) or 541-337-2285 (cell); Lori Christy, home visitor covering Salem, Portland and surrounding areas, at 503-390-9494 (Salem Area Office) or 541-272-2241 (cell); or Danelle Smith, home visitor covering Siletz and the Costal Range, at 541-444-9603 (office) or 541-270-8941 (cell).

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provided a financial boost to members reeling from the economic downturn brought on by the pandemic.

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But Tribal governments will lose unspent CARES Act funds when the year ends, and the pandemic hasn't “gone away” as President Trump has repeatedly insisted since COVID-19 reached the U.S.'s shores. While Oregon Tribes have largely avoided the calamitous outbreaks that other Indigenous nations have suffered, case numbers are hitting record highs across the country.

“It feels like we’re back to where we were in March,” says Chris Mercier, vice chair of the Grand Ronde Tribal Council. They received roughly \$45 million in CARES Act money for emergency response to the pandemic. “We don't really know what's going on. State and federal governments are preoccupied with other things. Especially at the federal level. We just concluded the presidential election, so it's just hard to say.”

The release of a vaccine expected sometime next year will create a new set of challenges as governments find ways to store and distribute it. **Lisa Norton, a temporary project manager for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians**, said she can see Tribal members needing support for another 3-6 months.

“So between the ongoing need for the health and safety of our Tribal members, to be able to even access the items necessary to make that happen, are all things that keep us up at night,” Norton said.

Tribal governments generally lack a tax base and rely on enterprises such as casinos to generate revenue. Precautionary measures, including business shutdowns and closing reservations to visitors, have caused budget shortfalls. The U.S. government, meanwhile, has treaty obligations to ensure Tribal governments can provide resources and essential services.

“We are a sovereign government within the U.S., but we do have a treaty relationship that binds us to the federal government and creates a special relationship there,” said Matt Johnson, communications director for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. The Tribe has received nearly \$26 million this year to help purchase personal protective equipment and provide financial assistance to its members.

“I don't know what could happen if some other major waves or spike impacted the national economy. Obviously that's going to have an effect on us as well,” Johnson said. “But I think we've prepared ourselves as best we can at this point and are just trying to continue to emphasize vigilance and good health and safety practices.”

“The need isn't going to stop after Dec. 30.” – Lisa Norton, temporary project manager for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

A spokeswoman for U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley says he's pressing Senate leadership to include a deadline extension in a spending bill, “since there's no indication that (Senate Majority Leader Mitch) McConnell will allow a coronavirus relief bill to come to the floor that could include that fix.”

And a spokesman for U.S. Senator Ron Wyden said the Oregon Democrat is sponsoring legislation to extend the spending deadline and thinks Tribes should get additional aid.

Federal assistance has also flowed into nonprofits serving Native Americans in Oregon, and Tribal governments have benefitted from equipment donations.

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board received a \$316,646 grant that they've used to help 35 Tribal clinics across Oregon, Washington and Idaho. The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians was one of the earliest Tribes to receive one of 250 so-called “Abbott Machines” back in May. Its technical name is the Abbott ID NOW, which allows on-site testing that gives results in 15 minutes.

Since then, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has allocated more than 500,000 units of an upgraded testing system – the Abbott Binax NOW COVID-19 AG card – to Indian Health Service clinics nationwide, including the CTSI.

But direct relief remains an important part of Tribal governments' playbook in combating COVID-19. Siletz officials say they've received about \$39 million in federal money per the CARES Act of 2020. They've used much of that to help Tribal members with rent and mortgage assistance and utilities since the pandemic came to the Pacific Northwest. It's also being spent on personal protective equipment for health care workers.

“We were very adamant in that we wanted to try and provide whatever services we could so we wouldn't overwhelm our local county health care partners,” said **Cherity Bloom-Miller, the clinical services director for the CTSI**. Six months into the pandemic, the clinic began offering the majority of its services again. “You have to find ways to do this safely and I think we've done a really good job of that.”

Some Tribes say they expect to use their CARES funding by year's end. Mercier of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde says their \$45 million has provided members with financial assistance, ranging from rental assistance to providing \$500 for parents wanting to purchase new laptops for their kids. But that leaves the Tribal government with new challenges.

“Teachers are way, way underpaid, especially those who have to deal with younger people,” Mercier says, adding that he's been having a tough time keeping his stepkids focused and engaged with virtual learning.

“That's becoming an additional source of stress to some of the families in our community. I don't know if I'd call it cabin fever or what, but just this sense of sitting around waiting for the world to return to normal and not knowing when that's going to be, I think that's its own form of stress.”

Uncertainty also sits heavy on Norton, the project manager for the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. A survey conducted in July showed Tribal members are contending with job loss and with

2020-2021

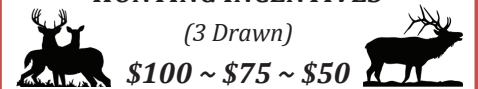
**Hunting * Fishing * Gathering
REPORTING INCENTIVES**

CTSI Tribal members:

Please report all harvests with your tribal license for deer, elk, salmon, and shellfish to the Natural Resources Dept. Once reported, the name on the tribal tag/permit will be included in a drawing after the season closes for one of the following **Cabela's gift cards**:

HUNTING INCENTIVES

(3 Drawn)



\$100 ~ \$75 ~ \$50

FISHING INCENTIVE

\$50 (1 Drawn)



SHELLFISH INCENTIVE

\$50 (1 Drawn)



Report all harvests to:

Mike Kennedy, 541-444-8232

mikek@ctsi.nsn.us -OR-

Denise Garrett, 541-444-8227

deniseg@ctsi.nsn.us

THANK YOU!

basic living costs becoming more expensive. And then there's that spending issue before New Year's.

“I think we're in the same boat as every other Tribe, every other jurisdiction across the state,” Norton said. “We have a limited number of things we can spend it on, but everybody's competing for the same resources. Whether it's PPE or laptops or computer desks, anything we're attempting to get there's jurisdictions that are also attempting to get.”

Norton said vendors and contractors can't guarantee projects would be done by Dec. 30. She's unsure if they'll have requisitioned acrylic sheet barriers and additional face masks delivered by year's end.

“The need isn't going to stop after Dec. 30,” she said. “Numbers are skyrocketing. Our hope is that Congress will extend the deadline for the money to be used or they could do another round of spending.”

About the author: **Brian Bull** has been involved in journalism for 25 years and has filed for National Public Radio, the BBC and other broadcast outlets. A proud citizen of the Nez Perce Tribe, Bull mentors up-and-coming journalists of color through NPR's Next Generation Radio Project. When not covering news in the Pacific Northwest, he's either spending time with his family or looking for hidden patches of huckleberries.

Underscore is a nonprofit collaborative reporting team in Portland focused on investigative reporting and Indian Country coverage. We are supported by foundations, corporate sponsors and donor contributions. Follow Underscore on Facebook and Twitter.

Tribal employment information is available at ctsi.nsn.us.