DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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COVID-19 home health care tools headed to American Indian elders

January 12, 2021

Blood pressure monitors, pulse oximeters and technology that supports telehealth and behavioral health visits are on their way to elders from Indigenous communities in Minnesota. The Native American Community Clinic in Minneapolis and the Northwest Indian Community Development Center in Bemidji are distributing these infection prevention tools through a grant contract with the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

“Simple equipment can help people stay healthy at home, save lives and make a real difference,” said Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead. “This a smart, targeted approach to support Indigenous communities in Minnesota.”

More than $500,000 will be used to provide equipment and technology to help at-risk American Indians access primary care and supportive services that keep them safe at home. State and federal health agencies advise adults at greatest risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 to stay safe at home until they can be vaccinated.

Data shows American Indians have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 infections and fatalities during the pandemic. They have the highest percentages hospitalized (16%), admitted to the ICU (6%), and deaths (4%) due to COVID-19 compared to other racial and ethnic communities.

Federal aid from the Coronavirus Relief Fund will pay for these efforts. Gov. Tim Walz’s working group on at-risk populations, a multi-agency collaboration to address COVID-19 in these groups, developed the intervention and received approval from the state’s Legislative Advisory Commission.

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