



Legally Brief

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Native American populations do not escape the devastating impact of COVID-19 and in many ways are hit even harder. Consider for a moment:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identify several health risk factors for severe symptoms and mortality related to a coronavirus diagnosis, including increased prevalence of heart disease, diabetes, and renal disease. These conditions are highly prevalent in Indian Country, making Native American communities more vulnerable to epidemic and pandemic outbreaks of respiratory illnesses.
- **In fact, during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, Native American communities suffered mortality rates four times higher than that of all other racial and ethnic groups combined.**
- The Indian Health Service serves over 2.5 million tribal community members, yet hospital facilities, medical supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are increasingly scarce:
 - According to the Indian Health Service statistics, there are only 625 hospital beds to serve members of 574 tribes in the US.
 - Over half of all Tribal leaders have indicated that they do not have the capacity to isolate presumptive coronavirus patients.
 - 87% of Tribal leaders and health care providers report they have not received PPO from the federal government, not do those communities have the diversity of business entities to produce it unilaterally.
- Many tribal communities are dependent in part or in whole on casino income, which is effectively shut down at this time; isolation and economic adversity greatly increases the prevalence of domestic violence, an already serious issue in tribal communities.
- Tribal Courts are responding: The Tribal Law and Policy Institute has created the Pandemic Resources for Tribal Courts Guide, complete with examples of COVID-19 Tribal Court Provision examples and examples of Tribal Court Emergency Standing Orders.
- Find out more about this and other issues impacting the Tribal communities at <https://www.home.tlpi.org/covid-19>

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