



ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

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Abbott ID NOW Testing Units Being Delivered to Rural Alaska health facilities;

Testing kits for rapid detection of novel coronavirus dispatched to protect residents of rural communities

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) is distributing 40 rapid testing machines and 2,400 test kits for diagnosing novel coronavirus throughout communities in rural Alaska in an effort to help ensure that many remote areas, accessible only by increasingly limited air service, will now have test results for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) the same day a person is tested. At present our State's geographically isolated communities wait a week or more for report results as tests are flown to state labs in Anchorage or Fairbanks, or to private out of state labs.

Tribal health systems in Alaska's rural and remote communities can help save lives, when provided with the necessary tools. Early and broad testing for COVID-19 has been shown to help isolate cases from becoming more widespread throughout a community. Much needed additional units are planned to be delivered to other areas of the state later from other sources, including the Indian Health Service and the State of Alaska.

"Our deepest gratitude goes out to Abbott for recognizing the history and logistical challenges rural Alaska communities face, and for their supply of the ID NOW testing units, where we know testing will have a much greater impact in savings lives and communities for a comparatively insignificant number of tests," said Andy Teuber, ANTHC Chairman and President. "Testing for COVID-19 is a primary tool in our effort to keep the pandemic out of our Alaska Native communities and we are grateful to Abbott for recognizing the critical importance of this measure, and our staff, who have been working tirelessly to see this effort through to fruition."

Living with us are generations of Alaska Natives with survival stories of pandemics including the Spanish Flu of 1918-19 where nearly 82 percent of the mortalities were Alaska Native people, the tuberculosis epidemics through the 1950s which was the leading cause of death in Alaska and at one point accounted for more than a third of all mortalities for Alaska Native people, and the 2008-09 H1N1 Flu in which Alaska Natives had four times higher mortality rate.



Testing device distribution plans

ANTHC is working with its Tribal partners across the state to distribute the ID NOW testing units and testing kits. Consistent with Tribal self-governance, each region that received the machines will distribute and use them in the best clinical manner for the areas they serve. The testing devices may be subsequently circulated and shared as changing needs for COVID-19 testing evolve.

- Testing capabilities in addition to ID NOW devices will still be available and change with statewide needs
 - The Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) now has Cepheid testing available with 600 tests and capability to run 30 to 60 tests per day
 - The State lab in Fairbanks is running tests with a reported 24-hour turn around once the lab receives the sample
 - Quest and LabCorp can process tests through out-of-state labs

- Factors impacting Alaska Tribal Health System
 - Tribal health facilities in rural areas are often the only health care locations and serve all residents, Native and non-Native alike.
 - Weather, geography, and accessibility due to transportation challenges makes advance distribution of testing supplies essential
 - Transient workforce industries such as fisheries, pose a tremendous threat to Alaska Native communities and make early identification of COVID-19 even more critical.
 - Ability to safely self-isolate COVID-19 positive patients is very limited in many locations and rapid diagnosis is essential in those areas.

Initially, 40 ID NOW test analyzers will be sent with 48 COVID-19 test kits each and ANMC will hold the remaining tests to resupply areas upon request. Regional Tribal Health Organizations will decide how to distribute within their regions.

- Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation
- Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium
- Tanana Chiefs Conference
- Norton Sound Health Corporation
- Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
- Maniilaq Association
- Arctic Slope Native Association
- Kodiak Area Native Association



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- Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association
- Eastern Aleutian Tribes
- Kenaitze Indian Tribe
- Chugachmiut
- Native Village of Eyak
- Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments-Fort Yukon
- Copper River Native Association
- Native Village of Eyak
- Ketchikan Indian Community
- Metlakatla Indian Community
- Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium
- Seldovia Village Tribe
- Yakutat Tlingit Tribe

To learn more about ANTHC's programs and health services offered to our communities, please visit anthc.org