

Navajo Nation hopes alternative care sites will help slow COVID-19

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz — The Navajo Nation Health Command Operations Center began housing and isolating individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 several weeks ago at three alternative care sites and several isolation sites to help slow the spread of the virus on the Navajo Nation.

The three alternative care sites are Miyamura High School in Gallup, Northwest High School in Shiprock and Chinle Community Center in Chinle, Ariz.

“The curve is flattening on the Navajo Nation, even as we test our people aggressively. The Navajo Nation is testing our citizens at a higher rate per capita than any state in the country – nearly 15-percent of our people,” Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez said.

“Testing, contact tracing, and the public health orders are working and helping to bring the daily numbers to a steady pace and we are hopeful that with more people isolating in these facilities we will begin to see a consistent decline in new cases.”

The alternative care sites provide stepdown alternatives for COVID-19 patients to support recovery. A portion of the alternative care sites are used for patients to safely isolate. By receiving and caring for less severe COVID-19 patients in the alternative care sites, local hospitals are able to focus on more critically ill patients and minimize the exposure of frontline health care workers and family members.

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The isolation sites are provided for patients who do not have stable housing or are unable to self-isolate at home. Following a positive diagnosis for COVID-19, patients with no or minimal COVID-19 symptoms are requested to self-isolate for approximately 14-days, and will be provided an option to be placed in an isolation site to reduce exposure to family members.

Eligibility for alternative care site placement includes the following:

- Have a lab-confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis
- Meet specific health criteria determined by your doctor and case manager
- Do not require extensive nursing care or assistance with activities of daily living
- Are unable to quarantine or receive care at home

Eligibility for isolation site placement includes the following:

- Be able to conduct activities of everyday life independently
- Unable to be isolated at home
- Meet specific health criteria determined by your doctor and case manager
- Be over the age of 18, unless part of a family who is COVID-19 positive

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- Not under the influence of alcohol or drugs or likely to experience withdrawal
- If you have transportation, patients will be asked to report to the facility. If transportation is needed, arrangements with the facility may be made

Alternative care and isolation sites are designed for short-term care, and patients are expected to checkout once after they have tested negative or have completed the recommended duration of medical care or isolation.

If an individual is showing symptoms of COVID-19, it is vital to get tested. Individuals should also be prepared for a possible hospital stay. Notify your emergency contact of your plans, lock your home and secure personal belongings, and arrange for the care of any pets or livestock. Patients should also bring a photo ID, health insurance cards, prescribed medications, advanced health care directives, personal health records, emergency contacts, clothing and footwear, toiletries, hygiene products, and other items needed for short-term stay.

For more information including reports, helpful prevention tips, and more resources, please visit the Navajo Department of Health's COVID-19 website at <http://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19>

. To contact the main Navajo Health Command Operations Center, please call (928) 871-7014.