

South Dakota National Guard

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SD Guard supports IHS/OST vaccination events on Pine Ridge

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KYLE, S.D. – The South Dakota Army National Guard provided support to Indian Health Services and the Oglala Sioux Tribe during two COVID-19 vaccination events on the Pine Ridge Reservation, April 16-17.

IHS in partnership with the OST requested the support of the SDARNG for vaccination events in Kyle and Pine Ridge to create an additional opportunity for members of the community.

“We want to provide multiple options for community members to receive the COVID-19 vaccine,” said Dayle Knutson, chief nurse of the Great Plains Area for IHS. “This is another event that we can host in conjunction with our tribal partners to ensure we provide adequate accessibility to COVID-19 shots.”

The SDARNG’s 730th Area Support Medical Company out of Vermillion provided medical personnel to assist in administering the vaccine and to provide administrative support.

“It’s nice to feel meaningful and that we’re doing something good for the community, not just our own Guard members but for civilians as well – it’s a good purpose,” said Spc. Shelby Roda, a combat medic with the 730th.

Vaccines were available for residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation and patients of the Pine Ridge IHS Service Unit – aged 16 years and older. The events also included a health fair to offer information and provide small health program items for community members.

Events like these make the COVID-19 vaccine available for community members that may not be able to receive it yet elsewhere.

“I’m currently a college student, and they’re not offering the vaccine as much as they are here, so I thought it was important to get it at home rather than wait,” said Emily Knutson, an OST member and student at South Dakota State University. “I’m here to get the vaccine because I haven’t been able to hug my grandma in over a year, and my best friend has type I diabetes and I haven’t been able to see her in over a year.”

Providing community members the opportunity to improve and learn about their wellbeing has multiple effects on overall health.

“The more people we can vaccinate and bring in to educate on the scientific facts, the better we can stop COVID-19,” said Maj. Josh Paull, a physician’s assistant for Medical Command, SDARNG. “COVID-19 has obviously impacted the physical health of our communities, but it’s also had devastating effects on the mental health of many. By offering vaccines and a path to normal, it not only helps the health of our communities but also the mental health by bringing us back together.”

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210416-Z-YW529-1068: Soldiers with the 730th Area Support Medical Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, provide support to Indian Health Services and the Oglala Sioux Tribe during a COVID-19 vaccination and health fair event in Kyle, S.D., April 16, 2021. The 730th provided medical personnel to assist with administering COVID-19 vaccinations to members of the OST and to provide administrative support. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)



210416-Z-YW529-1084: Lt. Dwan Kendrick, deputy CEO of the Pine Ridge Service Unit, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, assists members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe register for a COVID-19 vaccination and health fair event in in Kyle, S.D., April 16, 2021. The health fair is one of two COVID-19 vaccination events held on the Pine Ridge Reservation in April to offer the vaccine, information and small health program items for community members. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)



210416-Z-YW529-1045: U.S. Army Sgt. Hien Nguyen, 730th Area Support Medical Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, gives the COVID-19 vaccine to an Oglala Sioux Tribe member during a COVID-19 vaccination and health fair event in in Kyle, S.D., April 16, 2021. The 730th provided medical personnel to assist with administering COVID-19 vaccinations for members of the OST and to provide administrative support. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)



210416-Z-YW529-1049: A member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe visits with Oglala Sioux Tribe Community Health representatives during a COVID-19 vaccination and health fair event in Kyle, S.D., April 16, 2021. The event was one of two opportunities held on the Pine Ridge Reservation in April to offer the vaccine, information and small health program items for community members. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)