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# The Chickasaw Nation

## Office of Health Policy

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# Community Outreach Newsletter

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## Updates from the Office of Health Policy



Happy spring from the Chickasaw Nation Office of Health Policy! Our office has been busy with strategic planning, with a national focus on assisting with the development of the strategic plan for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Tribal Technical Advisory Group. After a year of dedicated work, the plan will help advance our key priorities as we continue advocating for health policy that strengthens the health and well-being of the Chickasaw Nation and Native communities across Indian Country.

Strategic planning is an important part of our office. In health policy, we review and update the progress on our strategic plan quarterly and use it as a guiding star, or as some would say, our North Star. Metaphorically, a North Star provides guidance for life goals. We use our strategic plan to help us daily.

Recently, we asked our Chickasaw intern students to develop a strategic plan for their goals. They found this to be very helpful and even used it in some of their college assignments. I hope you too are setting a plan for your future. My goals for personal health, and for the health of Chickasaw citizens and other First Americans, are to promote health through tribal advocacy and education. We hope you find our articles helpful and inspirational. Chokma!

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## Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR) Update

The Chickasaw Nation is a recipient of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) demonstration project allowing tribal organizations to administer FDPIR programs through self-determination contracts. With these contracts, we purchase USDA foods for the FDPIR food program. The Chickasaw Nation was one of the first six tribes to operate a portion of our own food distribution program. This authorization was approved through the 2018 Farm Bill under P.L. 115-33. This was exciting news for tribes as it gave us the ability to provide these services through our Food Distribution Programs.

The Rolland Ranch out of Checotah, Oklahoma, provides ground beef and roast beef products that are high-quality. The Rollands live on a 4,500-acre ranch licensed through the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture and Food and Forestry. The Rolland Ranch is a family-owned Chickasaw business.

The beauty of the demonstration project is it allows Food and Nutrition Services the opportunity to see how tribal procurement may work under a food distribution program with hopes of future permanent funding. We received notification from USDA the Chickasaw Nation will be funded for this successful demonstration project through 2028. This is such a great opportunity to practice food sovereignty.



## Tick Awareness and Prevention

As temperatures rise and outdoor activities increase, tick awareness becomes especially important for protecting personal and family health. Ticks are small parasites commonly found in grassy areas, wooded environments and brushy locations. Tiny ticks can carry harmful diseases, including Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis and alpha-gal syndrome. Many tick bites occur during hiking, camping, gardening, hunting or spending time outdoors with pets. Preventing tick bites begins with taking simple precautions before going outside. Wearing long sleeves, long pants and closed-toe shoes help reduce exposed skin. Light-colored clothing also makes ticks easier to spot. Using Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved insect repellents containing DEET or permethrin provides additional protection against tick bites.

After spending time outdoors, individuals should carefully check their body, clothing, children and pets for ticks. Common hiding places include the scalp, behind the ears, under the arms, around the waist and behind the knees. Showering soon after outdoor activities may help remove unattached ticks. If a tick is found attached to the skin, it should be removed promptly with fine-tipped tweezers by pulling straight upward without twisting. Early removal greatly reduces the risk of disease transmission and helps support overall health and safety during outdoor seasons.

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*Any policy has the possibility of impacting health.*

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## Blood Donation

Communities across the region continue facing a critical blood shortage, creating an urgent need for donors through Our Blood Institute. Hospitals rely on donated blood every day for trauma care, surgeries, cancer treatments, chronic illnesses and medical emergencies. Just one donation can help save multiple lives and provide hope for patients and families during difficult times. Healthy individuals who are eligible to donate are encouraged to schedule an appointment and give blood regularly. Donating is safe, simple and one of the most meaningful ways to support local patients and strengthen community health.



## Measles Update

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States is experiencing a major increase in measles outbreaks during 2026. As of May 7, 2026, 1,842 confirmed measles cases have been reported nationwide, with 93% connected to outbreaks. Cases have been identified across 39 jurisdictions, including Oklahoma, Texas, California and New York. The CDC reports many current cases are linked to outbreaks beginning in 2025, demonstrating how quickly measles spreads when communities have lower vaccination rates.

Measles is a highly contagious viral illness spread through coughing, sneezing and close contact. Symptoms often begin with fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes before progressing to a rash. Outbreaks spread rapidly in schools, health care settings and public spaces.

The CDC emphasizes vaccination remains the best protection against measles. The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is highly effective at preventing infection and reducing complications. Public health officials continue encouraging families to stay current on recommended vaccinations to protect individuals and communities from future outbreaks.

We value your feedback.  
Please complete this survey:

