

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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Office of Health Policy

Greetings from the office of health policy. Sa-holhchifoat Judy Goforth Parker, Ph.D., APRN. Chikasha Saya. My name is Judy Goforth Parker. I am Chickasaw. You may remember me from my years in the Chickasaw Legislature or health care administration. I have been in the office of health policy for the past four years. In this office, we follow state and national legislation and policies affecting Chickasaw citizens.

Our office is busy with federal committee work such as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

We also collaborate with organizations such as the Oklahoma-based Southern Plains Tribal Health Board and National Indian Health Board. We work with other tribes to assure health policy is interpreted correctly as it impacts tribal nations. An example of the work we do is unwinding the Public Health Emergency (PHE). Medicaid enrollment will be affected as the PHE ends, and we are working with CMS to assure tribes and Medicaid participants are not negatively impacted.

We will be sharing a health newsletter quarterly with Chickasaw citizens attending Community Outreach meetings. If you have any ideas about health topics, please contact the office of health policy at Judy.Parker@Chickasaw.net with any suggestions.



Get Your Flu Shot!

In the office of health policy, we focus on preventing disease and improving the health of Chickasaw citizens. An easy way to stay healthy this fall is to get your annual flu shot.

Why should you get your flu shot sooner than later? The risk of contracting the flu increases during October and is at its peak during the winter season. This is because the disease thrives in cool, dry weather. This allows the virus to survive longer which causes more people to become infected.

By receiving a flu shot, you are protecting yourself from contracting the virus, therefore, preventing the spread of the virus to others around you.



Chickasaw Nation Department of Health Website

Scan this QR code to go to ChickasawNationHealth.net, where you can find more information on health services and events.



What Pandemics Have Taught Us

Pandemics are something we have been made very aware of these past couple of years. The global spread of COVID-19 has made a significant impact on everyone. The pandemic, declared in March 2020, was a reminder communicable diseases are something that humanity will continue to fight. This article will go through pandemics occurring in human history, and what we have learned since then about health practices.



One of the first notable pandemics was the bubonic plague, or the **Black Death**. The bubonic plague was responsible for the death of 30-60% of Europeans in the 14th century. This version of the plague was carried by fleas on rats. As many rats roamed the streets and homes due to poor housekeeping practices, the disease spread. Surprisingly, there are around seven cases of the bubonic plague in the United States every year in modern times.^{1,2}

The 1918 influenza pandemic was caused by an H1N1 virus and the location of its origin is unknown. It is widely believed one-third of the world's population was infected with this flu virus with 50 million deaths worldwide. Groups with higher rates of mortality ranged from children younger than 5, 20-40 year-olds, and those older than 65. It was unknown at the time how to prevent infection from the virus so no prevention practices were being utilized including isolation or vaccinations.³

Things we have learned from these past pandemics, and recently the global COVID-19 pandemic, is to practice prevention measures such as washing hands, getting vaccinated, staying home when we are sick and not eating after one another.

¹ [Bubonic Plague \(Black Death\): What Is It, Symptoms, Treatment \(clevelandclinic.org\)](https://www.clevelandclinic.org/health/condition/23191/bubonic-plague)

² [From Black Death to fatal flu, past pandemics show why people on the margins suffer most | Science | AAAS](#)

³ [1918 Pandemic \(H1N1 virus\) | Pandemic Influenza \(Flu\) | CDC](#)

AYA: Your Fitness Journey

AYA is a Chickasaw-originated fitness app designed to encourage users to walk, while learning Chickasaw words and history along the way. Upon installation of the app, you are asked to choose a walking partner. Each has their own journey and story prepared for you to follow. Along these journeys, you unlock new episodes, which contain parts of the character's story and information about the area you are virtually walking through, like the Homeland journey. In addition, users can participate in challenges with other groups within the app to compete for the most steps.

Since the launch of the app, it has had 52,526 downloads and a total of approximately 3.5 million miles walked as of June 30, 2022. Soon, a new feature will be available allowing users to walk with renowned Chickasaws, Te Ata and John Herrington and listen to audio stories while the users walk along a set path. The AYA team is continually working on this app to enhance the user experience, as well as improve the health of the Chickasaw people. We will share how to start local walking challenges in a future newsletter.



Available on the [App Store](#)
and [Google Play](#)