

Michigan Tribal Communities Upper Peninsula Mobile Mammography Event

Collaborating Partners: Beth Sieloff, Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc.; Rhonda Keil of Spectrum Health Betty Ford Breast Cancer Services; Kelly Hansen, Hannahville Health Center; Betty Jahnke, Bay Mill Health Center; Kristi Steger, Public Health, Delta Menominee (PHDM) Counties.

Project description and outcomes

This collaboration began with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc., (ITCM) reaching out to Spectrum Health Betty Ford Services in Grand Rapids in search of a mobile mammography unit to serve the 2 tribal communities/tribal health centers on reservations located near Delta, Menominee and Chippewa counties. In these remote rural communities, women of all races face structural and financial barriers to breast cancer screening.

Spectrum Health had never provided mobile mammography services to the Upper Peninsula which is 400 miles across the Straits of Mackinaw from their location in Grand Rapids. This didn't stop the Inter-Tribal Council from asking for their support, nor did it prevent the staff of Spectrum Health from approving the request. The only condition for approval was that the Inter-Tribal Council had to guarantee that all 100 appointment times were scheduled 10-days prior to the event. In addition to tribal organizations, this collaboration expanded to include local county health departments. The overall preferred outcome of this collaboration was to provide rural impoverished Native American women, no-cost breast cancer screening at their own tribal health clinic.

A tremendous amount of coordination went into organizing this event. To promote this event in local communities, tribal and public health partners solicited interviews on local radio and television stations to advertise these no-cost screening opportunities. These interviews, along with low cost advertising, and the use of social media (providing outreach to 33 counties) ensured that all appointment times were filled at both locations. Spectrum Health Betty Ford Breast Services staff validated every patient's insurance, waived co-pays for 3D Tomography imaging,, requested previous images from providers, and along with the staffs from Bay Mills and Hannahville made reminder calls to all the patients scheduled for screening. Additionally, the tribal clinics and ITCM staff addressed all logistics requirements to include: funding for travel, lodging for Spectrum staff, media coverage for the event, financial support for women who were uninsured, and transportation to/from the event.

The mobile mammography unit served two multiple day events in Hannahville (at the Health Center and the Island Resort Casino) and at the Bay Mills Health Center (2+ days). Hannahville held a one-day event at the Island Resort Casino to support casino employees and women outside the tribal community. Women who were screened, ranged in age from >40-64 years of age; and most if not, all required navigation services for insurance and/or transportation to the event. The WISEWOMAN coordinator at PHDM provided support for the Breast and Cervical

Cancer Control Navigation Program (BCCCNP) enrollment.

There couldn't have been a better team to bring this event together. This premier event eliminated barriers and promoted health equity in a rural remote area of northern Michigan where cancer mortality rates are higher than other populations. This unprecedented collaboration was supported by Michigan health systems separated by more than 400 miles. The efforts of the staff members from the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan and Spectrum Health Betty Ford Breast Services, and the representatives from the Bay Mills and Hannahville Indian Communities and the Delta Menominee Health Department ensured that 99 rural women of all races received unprecedented scheduling, insurance and transportation navigation services to ensure that any woman who requested screening was provided the needed accommodations with no out-of-pocket costs.

Learn More:

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