

Forest County Potawatomi Community: Take aggressive steps to end opioid abuse in Forest County

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(Crandon, WI) – The Forest County Potawatomi Community has launched a public awareness campaign aimed at eliminating opioid abuse in Forest County. The public awareness campaign will begin with television ads and print displays around Forest County.

It also includes a website, www.fcpchelp.com, with specific details on where people can find addiction treatment and inpatient / outpatient counseling services.

A copy of the television ad can be viewed on the Forest County Potawatomi Facebook page.

The Tribe hopes these ads will help bring attention to the opioid problem in Forest County and compel individuals to seek help for themselves or others fighting addiction.

“The opioid problem is devastating effect on Forest County. Too many lives have been lost and too many families have been torn apart,” said Tribal Chairman Ned Daniels, Jr. “Together we can solve this problem, but we need the entire Forest County community to help.”

The Tribe has taken a number of additional steps to help combat the opioid problem in Forest County in addition to the public awareness campaign. Earlier this year, the FCPC made a commitment to provide additional funding to several Forest County law enforcement agencies to hire additional officers. The Forest County Sheriff’s

Department will receive nearly \$450,000 over the next two years to hire two additional drug enforcement officers. The Crandon Police Department will also receive more than \$225,000 over the next three years to hire an additional police officer. These contributions are in addition to the on-going support that the FCPC provides local law enforcement each year.

The Tribe has also brought together key stakeholders from state and local agencies to share information and discuss ways to improve the treatment and prevention of opioid addiction. The FCPC is also taking a very aggressive approach to treat those struggling with addiction. FCPC AODA provides access to treatment services for not only the Tribal community, but Forest County and the surrounding area as well. With the help of a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services the Tribe has set up new programs and hired additional specialists to help those individuals struggling with addiction.

This includes the addition of, or enhancements to, the following programs:

- Behavioral Health Services
- Primary Care Services
- Inpatient Treatment
- Transitional Living
- Wellness & Tribal Court
- Culturally-based Supports
- Self-help Supports (NA/AA)
- Recovery Coach Support

Rise in Opioid Abuse in Forest County:

According to data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Forest County has experienced some of the worst effects of the opioid epidemic based on population. From 2010 – 2016, the average Wisconsin county suffered a 74% increase in the rate of opioid-related discharges. However, Forest County has more than quintupled that average increase, seeing its rate explode by 415% over the same period.

In addition, opioid-related hospital encounters in Forest County have sky-rocketed. From 2011 – 2016 the number of opioid-related hospital encounters for people 15 – 24 years of age increased by 750%. Over the same period, the number of encounters for those between 25 – 44 years of age increased by an astounding 1,100%. Combined, these two age groups comprised nearly 84% of all Forest

County hospital counters due to opioids in 2016.

Data from the Forest County Sheriff's Department shows that the county has seen 37 non-fatal opioid related overdoses and nine deaths related to opioids so far in 2018.