



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Susanville Indian Rancheria Tribal Community

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## Shelter in place and protect your lungs

COVID-19 is a new kind of coronavirus that has affected people and families all over the world. The virus attacks people's lungs, causing breathing problems and even death. Doctors are working to find medicine to treat sick people. Health care workers know the virus is worse for people who already have weak lungs, including people who smoke tobacco, use marijuana or vape.<sup>1</sup>

One way to fight the spread of this virus is to practice social distancing, or shelter in place. Keeping a safe distance of at least six feet between people in public helps to fight the virus because the virus spreads very easily from one person to another.

One way people practice social distancing is to stay in their homes. But some people live in homes where family members smoke. Smoking is a health risk for the smoker, but it is also a threat to anyone near the smoker. Anyone near a smoker will breathe secondhand smoke.

There is no safe level of secondhand smoke—breathing even a small amount of it is harmful. Secondhand smoke stays in the air for hours and travels up to 20 feet.<sup>2</sup> Anyone who lives in a home where someone smokes has weaker lungs and is at higher risk from COVID-19.

If you live with someone who smokes tobacco, uses marijuana or vapes, how do you stay safe while you shelter in place? What steps can you take to protect your lungs from secondhand smoke?

There is hope. Susanville Indian Rancheria is leading the way to protect the health of tribal members by adopting non-smoking policies. Smoke-free space will reduce the risk of secondhand smoke. "Today we know what happens with smoking and secondhand smoke and the awareness brings a huge difference," said Phil Bush of the Nevada California Indian

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<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

<sup>2</sup> <https://smokefree.gov/quit-smoking/why-you-should-quit/secondhand-smoke>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lung.org/policy-advocacy/tobacco/smokefree-environments>

Housing Association. "It sets the example for other tribes and other housing authorities to take the bold step."

According to the American Lung Association, non-smoking policies not only help smokers quit but help others choose not to start in the first place.<sup>3</sup> Non-smoking policies take time, but they are worthwhile. Wanda Brown of the Susanville Indian Rancheria Housing Authority (SIRHA), says, "Let's make our air cleaner. Let's do whatever we can do."

More than ever, now is the best time to quit smoking. If you, or someone you know is thinking of quitting you can get information from your local Tribal Health Clinic. There are many resources to help. The California Smokers' Helpline has online tools and counselors available online and on the phone. The American Indian Commercial Tobacco Program offers help on how to stay away from or quit commercial tobacco use.

People around the world are worried about COVID-19. While our medical community learns new information about the virus, you can take steps to protect your health and the overall health of your community.

If you are interested in learning more about non-smoking housing policies for your tribal housing authority, California's Clean Air Project (CCAP) offers help to tribal communities, CCAP also works with leaders, policymakers, and health departments at the county and state levels. Visit [etr.org/ccap](http://etr.org/ccap) for more information.

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