

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Aaron Payment, 906-635-6050

## **Sault Tribe establishes COVID-19 Assistance Program**

SAULT STE. MARIE, Mich. — The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Board of Directors approved a direct services program July 6 to help tribal members. It will be funded with \$3.5 million in Covid-19 CARES Act monies.

Tribal Chairperson Aaron Payment said, on behalf of the Board of Directors, "We have worked hard with other tribes and national organizations to secure \$8 billion in the CARES Act to benefit tribes impacted by COVID19. Our Administration and Board are working hard to fashion tribal benefits in accordance with federal statues and guidelines. Unfortunately, tribes are held to a higher standard than state governments, so determining a spending plan is complex. We are clear, however, that federal guideline DO NOT permit a per capita type distribution."

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians COVID-19 Direct Tribal Member Assistance Program will provide emergency financial assistance to Sault Tribe members through the tribe's Anishnaabek Community and Family Services. The program will provide \$3.5 million of financial assistance to help Sault Tribe members meet necessary expenses incurred as a result of COVID-19.

In accordance with US Department of Treasury guidance, financial assistance disbursed to tribal members is only to be used for expenses such as medical, housing, personal property, food, transportation, funeral and similar direct member needs incurred as a direct result of COVID-19. Every adult enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe age 18 and over residing in the seven-county service area who has encountered COVID-19 financial hardships is eligible to submit the Direct Member Assistance Program Application. Only one grant will be awarded to each tribal member family household. Applicants may be required to submit documentation to evidence a COVID-19 related financial hardship.

"Our collective goal to provide relief from the pandemic in accordance with our tribal strategic plan," Payment said. "While our allocation was significant, our service area population for which the funds were based is large. Our priority is to meet the needs of our neediest and most impacted first."

Tribal members interested in applying can do so now by emailing [acfs covid@saulttribe.net](mailto:acfs covid@saulttribe.net) or by calling:

the ACFS toll free number, 1-800-726-0093;

Viola Neadow, Manistique ACFS, 906-341-6993;

Heidi Nesberg, Munising ACFS, 906-387-3906;

Angie Gillmore, St. Ignace ACFS, 906-643-8689;

Megan Miller, Sault Ste. Marie ACFS, 906-632-5250;  
Maggie Gaus, Sault Ste. Marie ACFS, 906-632-5250  
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