

National Indian Health Board



2018 Direct Service Tribes National Meeting

On July 11-12, 2018, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) participated in the Direct Service Tribes National Meeting (DSTNM) in St. Paul, MN. The DSTNM was preceded by the fourth quarterly meeting of the Indian Health Service (IHS) Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee (DSTAC) on July 10, 2018. The DSTAC is comprised of elected and appointed leaders from nine IHS areas with Direct Service Tribes (DSTs) that offers recommendations and policy guidance to the IHS. The DSTNM is an annual two-day event hosted by the Indian Health Service (IHS), focused on supporting community wellness and strength. The theme for the 2018 national meeting, “Utilizing people, partnerships, quality and resources to strengthen our communities” featured speakers and breakout sessions that addressed Direct Service Tribes (DST) health priorities.

NIHB Board Member, Donnie Garcia (Albuquerque Area) delivered the NIHB Update to the DSTNM which included information on the 2018 omnibus, appropriations for 2019, pending opioid legislation, an update on Medicaid workforce requirements and a listing of legislation that will directly impact DSTs. Joining Mr. Garcia was NIHB CEO, Stacy Bohlen who also spoke about an emerging issue for DSTs, the future for RPMS.

Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Eric Hargan addressed the DSTNM with updates from the administration. Deputy Secretary Hargan informed the DSTNM that it was his first time addressing a Direct Service Tribal audience and shared that there are similar needs and opportunities for Rural American and Tribal Nations. The Deputy Secretary also shared that HHS is seeking Tribal input to work together on the Administration’s recent proposal to reform and reorganize the Executive Branch, telling Tribes “I am CEO of this [HHS] Department. Seeing vast reach is part of providing programs that help Tribal members to draw on those resources. We need to make sure we keep that dialogue open.” He went on to say that normally HHS focuses on grants and reimbursement but he recognized that IHS is an area that needs a lot of focus, because of its uniqueness.

Tribal leaders also had the opportunity to respond Deputy Secretary Hargan’s comments. President Bruce Pratt of the Pawnee Nation, shared his Tribal concerns with Deputy Secretary Hargan, “My fear is the EHR issue, and we cannot take anything from the Tribal budget. Those are all needs which are underfunded.”

Dr. Glorinda Segay, Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Department of Health invited the Deputy Secretary to visit the Navajo Nation. “I’d like to offer you a front porch view to see our issues. We need quality service for our people” said Dr. Segay.

Updates were also provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). CMS indicated that there are currently waivers in KY, IN, NH that have been approved to include work and community

engagement requirements as part of Medicaid eligibility. Kentucky's implementation of the requirements have been delayed after a recent court decision remanded the matter back to CMS.

SAMHSA informed DSTs of an upcoming opportunity to engage with HHS through a department-wide town hall on "Combatting the Opioid epidemic in Tribal Communities," held July 24th in Washington, DC. This event will take place at the HHS Hubert Humphrey Building-Great Hall at 8:30 AM ET. SAMHSA will also be holding a virtual Tribal Consultation session on Tuesday, July 31, 2018 from 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM ET. Online registration is required to attend the consultation and written comments may be sent to tribalconsultation@samhsa.hhs.gov through September 14, 2018. The topic of the consultation is the Confidentiality of Substance Use Disorder Patient Records Regulation. Tribal leaders can also expect Tribal Consultation to follow this award season to evaluate and assess effectiveness of the Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) funds which feature a funding mechanism that is not a competitive grant program.

DSTM closed with a ceremony in recognition of the 2018 Direct Service Tribes Awards where President Bruce Pratt was awarded the 2018 Carol Ann Heart Spirit Award, whose recipient exemplifies leadership and advocacy, sense of humor and wit, energy and compassion, and a commitment to improve Indian health and education for all Native peoples.