



**June 1, 2020**

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders,

The Indian Health Service remains committed to strengthening partnerships with tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations through our communications as we work to collectively combat the COVID-19 epidemic in Indian Country. We look forward to a continued partnership to support phased reopening of workplaces and restarting the American economy.

Last week, I visited the [Navajo Area Office](#) and Command Center in Window Rock, Arizona and saw first-hand the excellent care our IHS team is providing. I met with the Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and joined him in the [Navajo Nation's virtual town hall on COVID-19](#). I am grateful for the strong leadership displayed by our tribal partners in working alongside Federal and State partners to ensure the safety and well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native communities. I observed powerful and uplifting examples of collaboration during my visits to the [Gallup Indian Medical Center](#), the [Shiprock-Northern Navajo Medical Center](#), and the [Crownpoint Health Care Facility](#). For example, each of these locations provide drive-through COVID-19 testing for community members. Thank you to our entire Navajo Area IHS team for your continued dedication to our patients.

Last week, HHS released a fact sheet on [How HHS is Supporting Indian Country in Response to COVID-19](#). The fact sheet summarizes how different agencies, including IHS, are engaging with tribal and urban Indian partners through technical assistance, consultation and confer activities, and by providing funding opportunities to address COVID-19.

On May 22, the [HHS announced \\$500 million in payments](#) from the Provider Relief Fund to the IHS and tribal hospitals, clinics, and urban Indian health centers to support the tribal response to COVID-19. These funds will be provided directly to our IHS federal, tribal, and urban Indian health programs through a contract that is managed by the HHS. Combined with previous funding, this distribution brings the total amount of new resources to the Indian health system to \$2.4 billion dollars. These resources will make a real difference in our ability to fulfill the IHS mission as we continue to work with our tribal and urban Indian organization partners to deliver crucial services during the pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention extended the application date for [their non-competitive grant, supporting Tribal Public Health Capacity in Coronavirus preparedness and response](#) to Wednesday, **June 3**. Eligible applicants include, all federally recognized tribes, tribal organizations, consortia of federally recognized tribes, or their bona fide agents. During a national emergency, these organizations are uniquely positioned to provide emergency preparedness and response support for tribal health departments and other components of the tribal public health system.

Additionally, IHS communicated key announcements by letter to tribal and urban Indian organization leaders:

- [May 22](#): IHS issued a letter requesting assistance in identifying priority health professions for inclusion into categories eligible for the IHS Scholarship Program 2021-2022 academic year and for the IHS Loan Repayment Program 2021 fiscal year. Your input helps to determine the approved disciplines for the upcoming academic and fiscal year. **Priorities are due by June 15.**
- [May 20](#): IHS announced updates about the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI). The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security CARES Act provided the SDPI with the remainder of the usual \$150 million for fiscal year 2020, as well as approximately \$25 million for fiscal year 2021. With the additional funding, all current SDPI grants have now been authorized up to their full annual grant amounts. Due to the high volume demands related to COVID-19 response activities, the IHS will utilize a continuation application process for 2021, which will be much less demanding for grantees to complete.
- [May 19](#): IHS announced distribution decisions for \$750 million in new resources from HHS to support testing and testing-related activities in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This one-time funding is being administered to tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian health organizations by HHS through the IHS. We sent an e-mail with a COVID-19 Testing Plan template that is intended to assist you in meeting the statutory requirements for funds that were allocated to purchase, administer, process, and analyze COVID-19 tests, as well as conduct surveillance, trace contacts, and related activities.

We have worked closely with tribes and urban Indian organizations throughout this pandemic to get resources out to facilities as quickly as possible, and that will continue with these funds.

In May, we began distributing [remdesivir](#) to IHS federal and tribal hospitals based on requests and current burden of patients with COVID-19 who are hospitalized or in an ICU. I encourage you to check out our [remdesivir fact sheet](#) for more details.

The IHS will continue to focus on getting supplies to meet the needs across the Indian health system. I appreciate your continued partnership and engagement while we work to combat the COVID-19 pandemic together. Please visit our [IHS coronavirus website](#) for the latest information.

Respectfully,

Michael

RADM Michael D. Weahkee, MBA, MHSA  
Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service  
Director, Indian Health Service

Below is general information on various topics that could be of interest to you and your community. Web links are included, where you can find more information on each topic.

#### **Tribal Consultation and Listening Sessions:**

UPCOMING:

- June 2 & June 3: [Remote Listening Sessions for the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives – Operation Lady Justice](#)
- June 10 & June 11: [Virtual ACF Annual Tribal Consultation](#)
- PAST: [NIH Tribal Consultation on COVID-19 research](#)

#### **Funding Opportunities and Technical Assistance:**

- [HHS Released Information on the Provider Relief Fund deadline for submitting revenue information](#) – **Deadline: June 3, 2020**
- **DEADLINE EXTENDED:** [CDC Noncompetitive Notice of Funding Opportunity \(CDC-RFA-OT20-2004: Supporting Tribal Public Health Capacity in Coronavirus Preparedness and Response\)](#) – **Deadline: June 3, 2020** – Every eligible Tribe or Tribal organization that applies is guaranteed funding under this announcement. This [webpage](#) supports the application.

- [SAMHSA seeks Applications for \\$40 million in emergency COVID-19 grants](#) for suicide prevention.
- NEW: [HRSA Awarded \\$15 million combat the COVID-19 pandemic in rural tribal communities.](#)

### **Testing/Supplies/Contact Tracing Resources:**

- [CDC Interim Guidance on Developing a COVID-19 Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Plan: Overview](#)
- [CDC Guidance on using PPE When Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Guidance on Considerations for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Assisted Living Facilities](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Households Living in Close Quarters](#)
- [CDC COVID View Report](#)
- [CDC Guidance on Disinfecting your home if someone is sick](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Caregivers, Parents, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders.](#)
- [CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection for Households](#)
- [CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Screening Clients for COVID-19 at Homeless Shelters or Encampments](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Sanitation and Wastewater Workers](#)
- [CDC Guidance on How to Protect Yourself When Using Transportation.](#)
- [CDC Guidance for Employers and Office Buildings](#)
- [CDC Funeral Guidance for Individuals and Families](#)
- [FDA Recommendations for Sponsors Requesting EUAs for Decontamination and Bioburden Reduction Systems for Face Masks and Respirators During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Public Health Emergency](#)
- [FDA Considerations for Prioritization of PPE, Cloth Face Coverings, Disinfectants, and Sanitation Supplies During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [National Healthcare Safety Network \(NHSN\) Long-term Care Facility \(LTCF\) COVID-19 module can assist with tracking infections](#)
- [ASPR Rural health in COVID-19 fact sheet](#)
- [FEMA Fact sheet and tool for Community Mitigation Measures](#)
- [FDA Enforcement Policy for Face Masks and Respirators During the Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Public Health Emergency \(Revised\)](#)