



September 28, 2020

Dear Tribal Leaders:

I would like to share some updates with you on COVID-19 vaccine planning and our work to expand evidence-based testing across Indian Country.

First, the Department of Health and Human Services, through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the IHS, initiated tribal consultation to seek input from tribal leaders on COVID-19 vaccination planning for Indian Country. We have created a new web page to share information and provide updates regarding a COVID-19 vaccine and this tribal consultation at <http://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/vaccine/>.

Beginning today and throughout this week, tribal leaders will have opportunities to ask questions and provide recommendations on COVID-19 vaccine planning for Indian country in a series of regional conference calls:

- September 28, 2020; 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM ET: HHS Regions 1, 2, 3, 4
 - o Dial-In: (415) 527-5035; Passcode: 199 433 5800
- September 28, 2020; 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM ET: HHS Region 5
 - o Dial-In: (415) 527-5035; Passcode: 199 237 2009
- September 29, 2020; 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET: HHS Regions 6
 - o Dial-In: (415) 527-5035; Passcode: 199 978 7009
- September 29, 2020; 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM ET: HHS Regions 7, 8
 - o Dial-In: (415) 527-5035; Passcode: 199 692 6624
- October 1, 2020; 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET: HHS Region 9
 - o Dial-In: (415) 527-5035; Passcode: 199 650 2728
- October 1, 2020; 4:00 – 5:00 PM ET, HHS Region 10

o Dial-In: (415) 527-5035; Passcode: 199 442 6687

In addition to feedback during conference calls, tribal leaders may provide input and recommendations in writing by submitting comments to consultation@hhs.gov. The deadline for written comments is Friday, October 9, 2020.

This consultation complements the state planning process that began last week with the publication of the [CDC's COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations](#). This playbook guides immunization program awardees in planning and operationalizing their COVID-19 vaccination response. Additional information on the strategy for vaccine distribution can be found in the [Operation Warp Speed Strategy for Distributing a COVID-19 Vaccine](#).

As we plan for the availability of a vaccine, testing continues to be a key part of our COVID-19 response. Last week, the Indian Health Service [announced](#) a plan to expand strategic, evidence-based testing across tribal communities. IHS has received 300,000 Abbot BinaxNOW COVID-19 point-of-care diagnostic tests that will be used to prioritize testing of American Indian and Alaska Native students and elders.

The BinaxNOW test has been authorized for emergency use by the Food and Drug Administration and will provide results in about 15 minutes without the use of a lab analyzer. Tribal and urban Indian organization health programs that care for K-12 schoolchildren who attend Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools, students at tribal colleges and universities, elders in senior living arrangements, and other special needs populations can request these tests through their [IHS Area Emergency Management Points of Contact](#).

I look forward to hearing your input regarding COVID-19 vaccine planning as we continue to work together to address COVID-19 in Indian Country. I encourage you to visit our [IHS coronavirus webpage](#) 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.

Testing/Supplies/Contact Tracing Resources:

- [CDC Updated FAQs on COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting your home](#)
- [CDC Information on Making a Handwashing Solution For Use in Global, Low-Resource Settings.](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Management of Patients with COVID-19](#)
- [CDC Updated Protocol for the tracing of close contacts](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance on When to quarantine](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance on When you can end home isolation](#)
- [CDC Updated Toolkit on cleaning, disinfecting, and hand hygiene in schools](#)
- [CDC Updated Staffing resources and guidance to enhance frontline public health capacity](#)
- [CDC Updated information on travel during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)