



October 14, 2020

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

We shared with you previously that the White House released [Operation Warp Speed's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Strategy](#) as well as the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Strategy for Distributing a COVID-19 Vaccine](#). These will serve as guides to states and jurisdictions in planning for COVID-19 vaccine activities.

Last month, tribal leaders had the opportunity to ask questions and provide recommendations on COVID-19 vaccine planning for Indian country in a series of Department of Health and Human Services regional conference calls. The IHS also completed urban confer on this topic. In addition to providing feedback during those conference calls, tribal leaders may provide input and recommendations in writing to HHS by submitting comments to consultation@hhs.gov.

In early September, the Indian Health Service formed the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force to lead the Agency's COVID-19 vaccine activities. The task force guides activities related to vaccine distribution and implementation. The task force has also developed the IHS draft vaccine plan with input from recent tribal consultations, urban confers and listening sessions. The IHS is now seeking input from tribal and urban Indian organization leaders on the [IHS COVID 19 Pandemic Vaccine Draft Plan](#).

The plan is based on currently available information. IHS will continue to assess, respond, and adapt federal guidance as new information becomes available regarding vaccine developments, vaccine storage requirements, risk groups, and prioritization recommendations by researchers and guidance bodies.

The deadline for written comments is **Wednesday, October 21**. For more on how to provide comment, please visit our [IHS coronavirus](#) webpage.

While we are still experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to deliver an important message about protecting yourself, your family, and your community this flu season. The flu vaccine is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the overall disease

burden, as well as the stress on the health care system, by decreasing hospitalizations and reducing influenza testing demand. At the IHS, we recently released our [2020-2021 Influenza Vaccination Action Plan](#), which identifies goals, best practices and barriers to the influenza vaccine. While all age groups over 6 months remain a priority for influenza vaccination, additional emphasis this season will be on adults at higher risk from COVID-19 complications including those with underlying conditions, American Indian and Alaska Native populations, and those who are considered essential workers.

And finally, we are excited to tell you that the IHS [announced a new 24/7 mobile messaging tool](#) for American Indians and Alaska Natives who want to quit commercial tobacco use. While sacred tobacco is important in many Native cultures for prayer, healing, and ceremony, commercial tobacco is harmful to our health. To promote living free of commercial tobacco, *SmokefreeTXT for American Indians and Alaska Natives* was created in collaboration with the [National Cancer Institute](#) to provide encouragement, advice, and tips to help quit smoking. By texting "NATIVE" to 47848, the 6-8 week program will provide participants with 3-5 text messages per day to provide support in their efforts to quit.

Please stay safe and let's all continue to take responsible actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 and follow the three Ws: **Wear** a mask, **Wash** your hands, and **Watch** your distance.

I encourage you to visit our [IHS coronavirus webpage](#) for the latest information.

Respectfully,

Michael

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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](#)