



December 7, 2020

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

As COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities are rising post-Thanksgiving, the federal government continues its coordinated approach working closely with federal, state, local tribal governments and the private sector to provide much needed medical personnel and supplies where they are needed.

Hope and help are on the way with a vaccine, but until then, we all need to hang on a little longer and continue the practices that keep ourselves and others safe. You can do your part now by practicing the 3 Ws: **Wash** your hands, **Watch** your distance, and **Wear** a Mask. Please continue to limit gatherings and travel as we move into the holiday season. If you do travel, read the most up to date [recommendations on quarantining](#) if you've been exposed to COVID-19. CDC has also published [new information](#) about how testing can be used to reduce the risks of spreading COVID-19 if you're going to travel.

We continue to make progress toward the impending rollout of safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19. This week, FDA is convening its independent advisory committee to discuss an emergency use authorization request for Pfizer's vaccine, which we have purchased access to up to 100 million doses, with the option to purchase 500 million more. After considering the input from these experts, FDA staff will ultimately determine whether the vaccine meets the agency's standards for safety and effectiveness. Please check [CDC's website](#) for a range of information about what we know about the COVID-19 vaccines now. In addition, HHS has produced a number of educational tools, including [the science of vaccines](#). I encourage you to check out these videos and share them with others.

Last week, the [CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) voted on interim recommendations for the initial phase of the COVID-19 vaccination program, indicating that vaccination should first be offered to both health care personnel and long-term care facility residents, while supplies are limited. Early protection of health care personnel is critical to preserving capacity to care for patients with and without COVID-19. The committee has been holding public meetings since June regarding COVID-19 vaccines, listening to the latest

information on the pandemic and vaccine development. Further clinical guidance is coming soon.

[HHS also announced](#) that all tribal health programs and urban Indian organizations have chosen their preferred distribution channel for a COVID-19 vaccine, after having the option of receiving it either through the IHS or their respective state. Once available, COVID-19 vaccines will be allocated to jurisdictions, including the IHS, which will then distribute to tribal health programs and urban Indian organizations. More information on IHS COVID-19 vaccine planning efforts is available on the [IHS coronavirus website](#).

As we continue to fight COVID-19 in tribal communities, it is important that we stay vigilant to scammers using the pandemic to benefit themselves. The [Office of Inspector General](#) reports that fraudsters are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams. To protect yourself and your loved ones from potential scams, be aware of those who unexpectedly offer COVID-19 tests and supplies or who ask for money to enhance your ranking for receiving the vaccine. If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, report it immediately [online](#) or call 1-800-447-8477.

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.

Vaccine Information:

- [FDA Vaccine Development 101](#)
- [FDA Emergency Use Authorization for Vaccines Explained](#)
- [FDA Vaccine Facts](#)
- [CDC Vaccine Information](#)
- [HHS COVID-19 Vaccine Update \(Video\)](#)

Testing/Supplies/Diagnostics/Contact Tracing Resources:

- [CDC Updated Guidance on Tracing of close contacts](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance on Prioritizing case investigations and contact tracing](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for critical workers developing a COVID-19 Response Plan](#)
- [CDC Updated Considerations for Casinos and gaming operations](#)
- [CDC Updated FAQs for law enforcement](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Correctional facilities and detention centers](#)
- [CDC Updated Information for Travel both domestically and international](#)
- [CDC Guidance for expanded screening testing](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Health departments on testing in the community](#)
- [CDC Updated COVID-19 one-stop shop toolkit](#)
- [ASPR Updated Hospital Toolkit](#)