



March 5, 2012



Dear Tribal Leader:

We are writing to initiate consultation to facilitate the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reimbursement for services provided by the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribal health facilities to eligible American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and VA have been in discussions about how VA will reimburse IHS and Tribes for care they provide to AI/AN Veterans who are eligible for VA health care. We propose that such reimbursement will be effected through agreements between IHS/Tribal health programs and VA. Pursuant to these agreements, VA would initially reimburse only for direct care services provided to eligible AI/AN Veterans. Such agreements would include certain measures to account for quality of care, and would be consistent with statutes and regulations governing health care provided by IHS and VA. We have developed a summary of the main points we would propose to include in a draft underlying agreement that would address reimbursement for direct care services to eligible AI/AN Veterans. Such an agreement would be implemented by VA, IHS and Tribal health facilities. The first step of this consultation is to request your input on the main points for such an agreement. Please see the enclosed document that explains the main points of a proposed draft, which defines the basic underlying agreement that sets forth the terms and conditions for reimbursement.

We would appreciate input from Tribes on this important issue. We plan to hold the first of several joint HHS/VA in-person consultation sessions at the IHS Tribal Consultation Summit to be held March 13-14, in the Washington, D.C. area. We will provide further details soon. Written comments should be submitted to both email addresses listed below no later than 30 days from the date of this letter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert A. Petzel.

Robert A. Petzel, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

Handwritten signature of Yvette Roubideaux.

Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Indian Health Service

Address for comments:

Email: tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov and consultation@ihs.gov