



**April 20, 2020**

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

The Indian Health Service is committed to working around the clock to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. I am grateful for our entire IHS team across the country, including those working on the frontlines providing critical care in our hospitals and clinics; and those working behind the scenes providing much needed support throughout the system. The IHS response in combatting the COVID-19 epidemic is strengthened through our partnerships with tribes and urban Indian organizations, and through our cross coordinated efforts with our federal, state and local partners.

I am pleased to announce that today, on April 20, 2020, the Federal Register published notice of the [Calendar Year 2020 Medicare and Medicaid Reimbursement Rates](#). In summary, there were increases to the rates across the board. This includes increases in rates for Medicaid inpatient and outpatient, as well as Medicare outpatient and ancillary visits in the lower 48 states and in Alaska. Please provide the Federal Register notice to your state Medicaid agencies and work to reach agreement for billing at the CY 2020 rates for services provided on or after January 1, 2020. IHS will initiate efforts with CMS to notify Novitas, the Medicare Administrative Contractor, to begin using the CY 2020 rates to make payments for services on or after January 1, 2020. Please continue to use the CY 2019 Medicare rates for billing services until additional guidance is provided by the CMS or Novitas. For more information, please directly contact Mr. Sam Brewster by e-mail at [Samuel.Brewster@ihs.gov](mailto:Samuel.Brewster@ihs.gov) or by telephone at (301) 443-2041.

I am also pleased to announce that as of April 19, 2020, 97% of the funds provided by IHS to tribal and urban Indian health programs have been obligated. This means these funds are available for tribes and urban Indian organizations to spend on COVID-19 related activities.

Last week, I was honored to work with the White House to create several public service announcements, [thanking our incredible Indian health workforce](#) and [encouraging our people to continue practicing social distancing](#) to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Indian Country.

Every Thursday, the Indian Country COVID-19 Response team continues to host calls with tribal and urban Indian organization leaders to provide critical updates and information on how we are working together to address COVID-19. These calls help guide our efforts to provide better care to meet the healthcare needs in Indian Country. [On Tuesdays](#), the IHS meets with urban Indian leaders so that they can provide comments and ask questions of our federal officials.

In response to the numerous questions the IHS received on how we are distributing our rapid testing resources, we are developing a rapid testing fact sheet. The IHS received 250 ID NOW COVID-19 rapid point-of-care test analyzers to distribute to selected IHS and tribal locations. The ID NOW COVID-19 test expands our coronavirus testing capacity by providing COVID-19 results in under 13 minutes. Analyzers were distributed to federal and tribal sites in rural and remote locations in 31 states. We continue to follow [CDC testing guidelines](#). For more information about testing, please visit the [Coronavirus COVID-19 FAQ page](#) on our website.

The IHS continues to work closely with tribal and federal partners to coordinate a comprehensive public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal, "to ensure that comprehensive, culturally appropriate personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people," has never been more important than it is today. For the most up to date IHS information, visit [www.IHS.gov/coronavirus](http://www.IHS.gov/coronavirus). We also regularly encourage our tribal and urban Indian organization partners to continue to regularly check the CDC website at [cdc.gov/covid19](http://cdc.gov/covid19) for the latest general information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Respectfully,

Michael

RADM Michael D. Weahkee  
Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS  
Principal Deputy Director, IHS

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.

**Funding Opportunities:**

- [Coming Soon – Health Resources and Services Administration’s \(HRSA\), Federal Office of Rural Health Policy received \\$15 million to prevent, prepare, and respond to COVID-19 in rural communities and will announce an upcoming notice of funding opportunity.](#)
- [HRSA Awarded \\$90 million for Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Recipients to respond to COVID-19.](#)
- [Administration for Community Living FAQs on Emergency Funding Opportunity](#)

### **Testing and Supplies**

- [The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced a new swab testing option to address shortages.](#)
- [HHS announced a new ventilator production contract to General Electric \(GE\), in partnership with Ford.](#)
- **Reusing N-95 Respirators:**
  - NIH released results of their [study that validates decontamination methods for re-use of N95 respirators.](#)
  - FDA issued an [emergency use authorization](#) of Stryker Instrument’s Sterizone VP4 Sterilizer1 N95 Respirator Decontamination Cycle for decontaminating compatible N95 and N95-equivalent respirators for single-user reuse by healthcare personnel.

### **Additional Guidance for Specific Populations**

- [COVID-19 Hospital Resources Package](#)
- [Correctional and Detention Facilities](#)
- [People at Higher Risk for Coronavirus](#)
- [People at Risk for Severe Illness](#)
- [Strategies for Long-Term Care Facilities](#)
- [Considerations for Assisted Living Facilities](#)
- [Preparedness Tools for Hospitals and Healthcare Workers Preparing for COVID-19 Patients](#)
- [Pediatric Healthcare Providers](#)
- [Programs Providing Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder](#)

### **General Guidance:**

- [What to Do if You Are Sick](#)
  - [Caring for someone at home](#)

### **Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting:**

- [Disinfecting your home](#)

- [Non-Emergency Vehicles](#)
- [Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- [Guidance for Exposed Healthcare Personnel](#)
- [No Evidence of COVID-19 Transmission via Groceries](#)
- [Hand Sanitizers and COVID-19 FAQs](#)