



**May 4, 2020**

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

At the Indian Health Service, we continue to prioritize the health and safety of our employees as well as the American Indian and Alaska Native people that we serve. The IHS remains resolute in responding to the COVID-19 epidemic through our partnerships with Tribes, Urban Indian organizations, and with our federal, state and local partners.

Last week, the IHS hosted a joint Tribal consultation with the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) (HRSA) to seek input on the additional allocations of the \$400 million from the Provider Relief Fund established by the CARES Act, and the \$750 million authorized under the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act. The IHS also held an urban confer session on this topic. Thank you for participating in these forums and providing us with your feedback. We welcome additional written input or comments. Please send them to our Tribal Consultation mailbox at [consultation@ihs.gov](mailto:consultation@ihs.gov) and to our Urban Confer mailbox at [urbanconfer@ihs.gov](mailto:urbanconfer@ihs.gov). We request that the subject line include “Provider Relief Fund” and/or “Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act.” Our goal remains to engage in meaningful consultation and confer as quickly as possible and to the maximum extent practicable whenever critical events arise, to meet our obligations to the communities that we serve.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and HRSA have announced a few funding opportunities:

- [Supporting Tribal Public Health Capacity in Coronavirus Preparedness and Response](#) – Today, CDC held a webinar on this grant opportunity designed to provide funding to federally recognized tribal health programs, i.e., tribes that contract or compact with IHS, as authorized under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, or consortia of these tribes. **The deadline to apply is May 31.**
- [Fiscal Year 2020 Rural Tribal COVID-19 Response Program](#) – HRSA’s initiative aims to provide maximum flexibility to assist Tribes, Tribal Organizations, Urban Indian health organizations, and health services providers to Tribes to prevent, prepare for, and

respond to the coronavirus and the evolving needs in rural communities. **The deadline to apply is May 6.**

Last week, the IHS published a new study, [Prevalence of diagnosed diabetes in American Indian and Alaska Native adults, 2006–2017](#). This study, led by the [IHS Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention](#) with researchers from the [CDC Division of Diabetes Translation](#), documents the first known decrease in diabetes prevalence for American Indian and Alaska Native people. As diabetes is a risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease, this improvement in the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native people is especially welcomed. Key to these efforts is the [Special Diabetes Program for Indians](#). Thank you to everyone throughout the Indian health system of care, working in our diabetes programs. Your participation has directly contributed to this significant accomplishment in Indian Country.

In recognition of the May 5th, National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives, Jeannie Hovland, the Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans, and I will release a public service announcement (PSA) to bring attention to this important issue. Despite the challenges imposed by the ongoing battle against COVID-19, [Operation Lady Justice](#) is continuing its work to address the legitimate concerns of American Indian and Alaska Native communities regarding missing and murdered people – particularly missing and murdered women and girls. We encourage you to share the PSA with your community.

This week, we also celebrate National Nurses Week and on May 6th we celebrate National Nurses Day. We extend our gratitude to our entire IHS team, including our nurses. We want to raise awareness of the value of nursing and acknowledge the critical role that they play in meeting the healthcare needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. We recently released episode three of [I am IHS](#), a multi-part video series featuring employee stories of service, dedication, and discovery. This episode highlights LT Kali Aberle, a family nurse practitioner at the McLaughlin Health Center in South Dakota, which is part of the [IHS Great Plains Area](#). The IHS appreciates the hard work and dedication of LT Aberle, and the entire team throughout the Indian health system, who are all working hard to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I will continue to provide regular updates through these weekly emails to our Tribal and Urban Indian organization leaders. In addition, we will continue to highlight our all-of-government approach and coordinated efforts during our weekly calls with Urban Indian Organizations on Tuesdays, and during our weekly calls sponsored by the White House with the Indian Country COVID-19 Response Team on Thursdays. Information about these calls can be found on the [IHS calendar](#). We hope that you will be able to join us.

Respectfully,

Michael

RADM Michael D. Weahkee, MBA, MHSA  
Assistant Surgeon General, United States 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.

**Funding Opportunities:**

- SAMHSA released [\\$15 million in supplemental grant awards](#) to 154 current Tribal Behavioral Health grant recipients to meet the increased mental and substance use disorders needs among Tribes.

**Testing and Supplies:**

- CDC released [principles and information on contact tracing](#) which highlights the basic principles of contact tracing to stop COVID-19 transmission, including detailed guidance for health departments and potential contact tracers.
- [FEMA released a factsheet on best practices for preserving PPE](#)
- [FDA has released FAQs on face masks that cover the specifications and includes the CDC guidance for when to use face masks and face coverings](#)
- [CDC released a document on Operational Considerations for Personal Protective Equipment in the Context of Global Supply Shortages for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: non-US Healthcare Settings](#)
- [CDC released updated information on Testing Clinical Specimens from Persons with COVID-19](#)
- [Shipments of PPE will be sent to 15,400 Medicaid and Medicare certified nursing homes across the country](#)

**Guidance and Other Resources:**

- The [COVID-19 Uninsured Program Portal](#) allows health care providers who have conducted COVID-19 testing, or provided treatment for uninsured COVID-19 individuals on or after February 4, 2020, to request claims reimbursement.

- [FDA released a fact sheet in coordination with CDC on what respirators, disposable facemasks, such as surgical or medical masks, or cloth face coverings are most appropriate for various settings](#)
- [FDA provided an update on its efforts to ensure the availability of alcohol-based sanitizer to help meet the demand for hand sanitizer during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [FDA updated their general FAQ document to include a question on the use of disinfectants to prevent or treat COVID-19](#)
- [CDC updated its Tribal resource page for information on reopening](#)
- [CDC updated their clinical care guidance for healthcare professionals](#)
- [CDC updated their webpage on What to Do if You Are Sick](#)
- [CDC has released reopening guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
- [CDC updated their information on keeping Children Healthy While School's Out](#)
- [CDC updated their guidance on criteria for Return to Work for Healthcare Personnel with Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19](#)
- [CMS announced another round of sweeping CMS regulatory waivers and rule changes to deliver expanded care to the nation's seniors](#)
- [CMS released guidance for retirement communities and independent living facilities](#)
- [CMS issued FAQs on Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act \(EMTALA\)](#)
- [HRSA awarded \\$20 million to increase telehealth access and infrastructure for providers and families to help and respond to COVID-19](#)
- [FEMA released a document with planning Considerations for Organizations in Reconstituting Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [NIH releases Promising Early Results from Remdesivir Trial](#)