



January 11, 2021

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

I want to wish everyone a happy and healthy New Year. As we begin a new year, it's important to take a look back and reflect on the challenges we have faced together, but more importantly, we should celebrate the [remarkable accomplishments](#) that have been achieved across the Indian health system.

As the Indian Health Service plans for 2021, we remain committed to our mission of raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level. I have great confidence that the IHS will continue to deliver results for American Indians and Alaska Natives across Indian Country.

Yesterday, the Department of Health and Human Services [announced](#) a web-based COVID-19 outpatient [treatment locator](#) to assist healthcare providers and patients in finding potential locations for treatment with monoclonal antibody therapeutics. These medicines are authorized for emergency use in treating patients with mild or moderate COVID-19 who are at high risk of developing severe symptoms and requiring hospitalization. This treatment locator enables patients and providers to find sites for outpatient treatment options, which may help reduce the number of people who require hospitalization for COVID-19 care, which in turn reduces the strain on our nation's hospitals and their staff.

The Office of Personnel Management approved a request to waive a section of federal law that pertains to retired workers. These new hiring waivers make it easier for the IHS to rehire health care and non-health care workers who can assist us in strengthening our collective response during the COVID-19 pandemic. Disciplines in high need include physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists, physician assistants, medical laboratory scientists, behavioral health clinicians, and engineers. Re-employed annuitants will receive Civil Service Retirement System or Federal Employee Retirement System annuity, in addition to a full salary as a federal employee. Those who are interested in re-joining the IHS team to help combat COVID-19 in Indian Country can [reach out to the recruiter](#) in their specific Area of interest.

I want to take just a few minutes to update you on the status of the transition of the Administration, as it relates to the Indian Health Service.

I remain committed to the IHS mission, but in order to allow the incoming administration to appoint new leadership -- as is standard in any presidential transition -- I have been asked to tender my resignation effective January 20th. Therefore, this will be the last bi-weekly COVID-19 update that I will send.

It has been a sincere honor to have been entrusted to serve in this role. I believe the IHS is more capable now than ever before of fulfilling our vision of healthy communities and quality health care systems through strong partnerships and culturally responsive practices.

Thank you for your friendship and partnership through the years. I look forward to the next opportunity when our paths will cross.

The biweekly COVID-19 update calls that are scheduled every other Thursday and these bi-weekly COVID-19 update emails will continue. The next call is scheduled for February 4th. Please watch for updates and information from the Department of Health and Human Services Tribal Affairs Team. You can also submit input or questions via e-mail to TribalAffairs@hhs.gov. I also encourage and invite you to continue to visit our [IHS coronavirus webpage](#) for the latest information.

Respectfully,

Michael

RADM Michael D. Weahkee, MBA, MHSA
Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. 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.

Vaccine Information

- [COVID-19 Education Campaign](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign for People who are Pregnant or Breast-Feeding](#)
- [Operation Warp Speed Accomplishments](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Allergic Reactions](#)
- [CDC Information about Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [CDC Information about Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- [FDA highlights on new coronavirus legislation](#)
- Links to CDC Vaccine Tool Kits:
 - [People 15 to 17](#)

- [People 18 to 24](#)
- [Summer camps](#)
- [Childcare programs](#)
- [People experiencing homelessness](#)
- [Correctional and detention facilities](#)
- [Retirement communities](#)
- [Tribal communities](#)
- [Older adults and people at higher risk](#)
- [People with disabilities](#)
- [Colleges and universities](#)
- [Worker safety and support](#)
- [Parks and recreational facilities](#)
- [Youth sports](#)
- [Shared and congregate housing](#)
- [K-12 schools](#)
- [Domestic travelers](#)
- [Community and faith-based organizations](#)
- [Businesses and Workplaces](#)

Testing/Supplies/Diagnostics/Contact Tracing Resources:

- [FDA COVID-19 Communication Toolkits webpage](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Businesses](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Correctional facilities and detention centers](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Contact Tracing Prioritization](#)
- [CDC Updated Information for Workplaces and businesses](#)
- [CDC Updated Guidance for Returning to work](#)