



TO: All Indian Health Service Employees SGM No. 24-05

FROM: Director

SUBJECT: Indian Health Service Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

The purpose of this Special General Memorandum (SGM) is to communicate and reaffirm the Indian Health Service's commitment to equal employment opportunity (EEO), and to a discrimination-free workplace.

Our success in ensuring that the Indian Health Service (IHS) fulfills its mission to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level relies on the contributions of every employee. Equity in employment opportunity is not only the law, it is a fundamental business practice that is essential to furthering our vision of achieving healthy communities and quality health care systems through strong partnerships and culturally responsive practices.

To this end, the IHS is committed to providing equal opportunity in Federal employment to its employees and applicants for employment. Pursuant to the anti-discrimination statutes, including, but not limited to, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the IHS will not tolerate discrimination or harassment (including sexual harassment) on the basis of: age; disability (mental, physical, or sensory); genetic information (including family medical history); national origin; pregnancy; race; color; religion; sex (including gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, or sexual stereotyping); or any other status protected by Federal laws and regulations. Consistent with the law, our commitment to equal opportunity extends to support for reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. In addition, the IHS adheres to the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which requires agencies to reasonably accommodate employees' known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless such an accommodation would pose an undue hardship to the agency. The IHS is also committed to ensuring a workplace free of discrimination and harassment based on the following: family or parental status; marital status; civil union status, or domestic partnership status; past or present military service; and/or political affiliation.

Indian Health Service employees and applicants for employment are also protected against retaliation. Retaliation in any form against an individual who reports unlawful discrimination or harassment is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Equal Employment Opportunity pertains to all human capital and employment programs, management practices and decisions, including, but not limited to, recruitment, hiring, benefits, promotions, reassignments, transfers, separations, appraisal systems, training, and career

development. All employees and applicants for employment will have the freedom to compete for opportunities on a fair and level playing field.

Managers and supervisors have an ethical and legal responsibility to fully implement EEO policies and programs to address the employment concerns of all employees. This can be achieved by actively supporting Diversity Management and EEO staff, including Area EEO Program Managers and specialists, EEO counselors, and other EEO contacts, as well as partnering with the IHS Office of Human Resources to recruit qualified applicants and retain employees, without regard to non-merit factors.

All IHS employees are accountable for creating a work environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment, while promoting professionalism, excellence, teamwork, respect, dignity, fairness, and equity. Equal Employment Opportunity principles outlined in this policy are vital to maintaining an inclusive, engaged, and productive workforce.

The IHS supports employees and applicants for employment in exercising their rights under EEO laws. Any employee or applicant for employment who believes they have experienced discrimination, or any form of harassment, is encouraged to contact Diversity Management and EEO staff, or their local EEO office, within 45 calendar days of the aggrieved action. A list of EEO offices is available online at <https://www.ihs.gov/eoo/staff/>.

As a way to achieve early resolution of workplace disputes and EEO complaints, I encourage managers, supervisors, and employees to utilize the IHS Mediation/Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program. A trained, neutral mediator can assist the parties in working out possible solutions to disputes, as well as helping improve communication and the quality of work-life. For information on using the Mediation/ADR Program for workplace disputes and EEO-related complaints, please contact DMEEEO or your local EEO Office and visit the DMEEEO Mediation/ADR website at <https://www.ihs.gov/eoo/medprogram/>.

I ask for your support and cooperation as we strive to make the IHS a model workplace and the best health care system in the Nation.

#### Effective Date

This SGM becomes effective on the date signed.

#### Supersedes

*Indian Health Manual* SGM 94-03, dated April 14, 1994; SGM 04-01, dated March 22, 2004; and SGM 95-01, dated March 15, 1995.

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