

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 28, 2010

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Secretary Sebelius and Director Roubideaux reaffirm their shared commitment to reforming the Indian Health Service

We commend Chairman Dorgan for his tireless efforts to improve health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives, and are committed to continuing to work with his Committee to identify and address the challenges facing the Indian Health Service (IHS).

We share the Chairman's commitment to improving the quality of care in Indian Country, and to bringing meaningful and lasting change to IHS. Toward that end, we were very pleased to work with him to include the landmark permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act as part of the Affordable Care Act.

The problems that Chairman Dorgan has identified in the Aberdeen Area are unacceptable, and we are already working to address them. An internal management review of the Aberdeen Area was completed in April, and significant progress has been made toward implementing the review's 54 recommendations. In addition, IHS is holding managers more accountable to specific performance measures. In part as a result of these efforts, collections from third parties in the Aberdeen Area are up 30% for this fiscal year, and, for the first time in 20 years, there were no budget deficits at the IHS service unit level in the Area.

Since last year, we have begun comprehensive reforms throughout IHS. This work is guided by four priorities:

- **Renew and Strengthen the IHS Partnership with Tribes.** Dr. Roubideaux has already had more than 270 meetings with tribal delegations, and is working to implement consultation improvements suggested by a Director's Working Group on Consultation.
- **Reform Indian Health Service Management.** Leadership and managers are being held accountable to balance budgets, justify expenses, and do better fiscal planning. We are also streamlining the hiring process.
- **Improve the Quality Of and Access to Care.** We have made specific and measurable improvements in customer service a key feature of performance evaluations. We are also expanding our Improving Patient Care Initiative to 100 more sites over the next three years.
- **Make Our Work More Transparent, Accountable, Fair and Inclusive.** Dr. Roubideaux provides regular updates on her efforts to IHS managers, employees, and partners. We have also enhanced the IHS website with the IHS Reform page, Director's Corner, and Director's Blog.

Finally, we are working together as part of the Secretary's Program Integrity Initiative to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse. The initiative includes a Program Integrity Task Force for the Aberdeen Area of IHS, comprised of senior officials from across the Department. It will ensure IHS benefits from the expertise

and support of professionals in other parts of the Department.

We all share in the collective goal to reach our goal and follow our mission: to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

The Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for providing federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The provision of health services to members of federally-recognized tribes grew out of the special government-to-government relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes. This relationship, established in 1787, is based on Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, and has been given form and substance by numerous treaties, laws, Supreme Court decisions, and Executive Orders. The IHS is the principal federal health care provider and health advocate for Indian people and its goal is to raise their health status to the highest possible level. The IHS provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to 564 federally recognized tribes in 35 states.

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