

# Renewing the Indian Health Care System

by  
**Robert G. McSwain**  
Director  
Indian Health Service



National Combined Councils Annual Meeting  
February 10, 2009

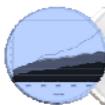
## We've been listening!



**WE WANT TO TALK WITH YOU – NOT TO YOU.**

We've heard about our healthcare system from Tribes, customers, community members, doctors, nurses and many others. We want to talk about what we heard and discuss some ideas with you.

## Encouraging Signs



Accomplished a steady and gradual expansion of services



Has political support – consistent but small budget increases



Concentrated in Indian country where few health care alternatives exist

## Encouraging Signs



Comprehensive scope – combines individual medical care, community, and public health services



Allies modern medicine with traditional Native values about health

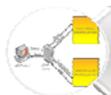


Contributed to remarkable advances in Indian health status

## Encouraging Signs



Fully accredited programs that combine local control with consolidated support.



New technology increasing access in areas of Indian Country



A dedicated workforce – largely AI/AN



5

## Troubling Signs



Sites run out of funds resulting in cut backs and risk of intermittent shutdowns



Rising denials for CHS payments



Medically necessary services are restricted, deferred, or unavailable



6

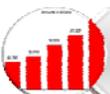
## Troubling Signs



Insufficient capacity (facilities, staffing, resources) - sometimes mismatched to needs



Chronically high vacancy rates



Rising tension with private sector partners - referrals without compensation



7

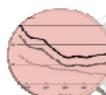
## Troubling Signs



Patients who are not members of the local Tribe are sometimes excluded due to funding shortfalls



Unhealthy lifestyles, poor diet, obesity, inadequate exercise



Disparities still exist despite decades of health improvements



8

## SOME IDEAS FOR WAYS TO RENEW OUR SYSTEM



9

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE IDEAS

- ✓ Securing a healthcare system for Indian people that fulfills our mission and goals
- ✓ Strengthening our core model – a community oriented primary care system
- ✓ Transforming but not diminishing services
- ✓ Equalizing access to healthcare services
- ✓ Seeking consultation on policies that affect Indian people
- ✓ Honoring sovereign tribal choice

10

## A RANGE OF APPROACHES TO RENEWAL

LOCAL

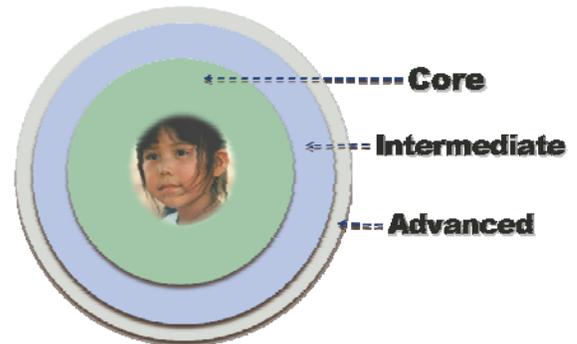


NATIONAL

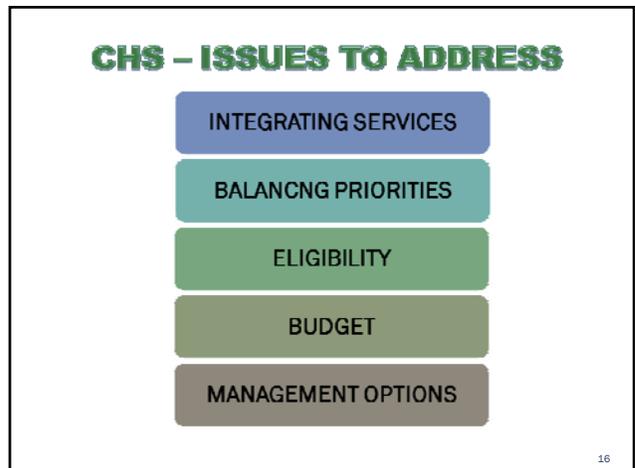
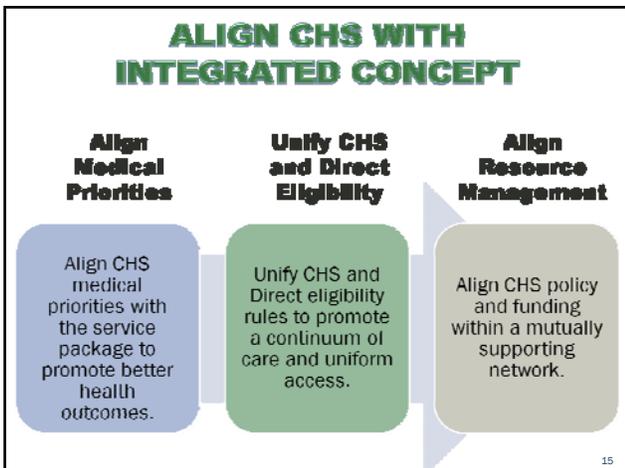
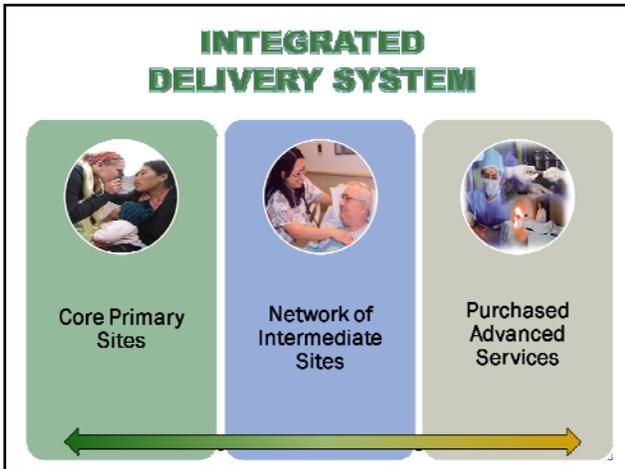
- Local in scope
- Immediate
- Improving local operations
- Underway
- Ex: Chronic Care Initiative

- National in scope
- Long-term
- System-wide focus
- Preliminary ideas
- Include tribal consultation

## SERVICE PACKAGE SURROUNDING EACH PATIENT



12



## WHY RENEW OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM?



We must secure and improve Indian healthcare, not only for this generation, but for generations to come!

17