



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, October 18, 2016

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Indian Health Service and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Partner on Pediatric Telehealth

*Pediatric specialty consultation services to benefit tribal communities in Arizona, Nevada,
New Mexico and Utah*

The Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Department of Pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) today entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to explore the creation of a pediatric specialty consultation service using telehealth for American Indian and Alaska Native children served by IHS.

“The Indian Health Service is dedicated to providing access to quality care for its patients, and over the years, IHS investments in telehealth have brought the best care to some of the most remote communities in the country,” said IHS Principal Deputy Director Mary L. Smith. “Through this MOU, we will be able to design and develop a service specifically for pediatric care and consultation for our patients that live in very rural areas and may not be able to travel long distances to a facility to see a specialist.”

As the first step, IHS and CHOP will develop a comprehensive pediatric telemedicine plan for communities in the IHS Navajo, Phoenix, Tucson and Albuquerque Areas. The goal is to create a model for physician-to-physician consultation services. CHOP doctors will provide advice to IHS health care providers on challenging and unusual cases, including diagnoses and courses of treatment.

“Access to pediatric specialty care is limited across much of the United States, with many communities experiencing delays in both consultation and service,” said Joseph W. St. Geme, M.D., physician-in-chief and chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. “As a result of this important initiative, children in rural communities will benefit from medical consultations provided directly, securely and effectively to their IHS health care providers by experts in the field of pediatric medicine.”

The pediatric specialty consultation services developed through this MOU will benefit tribal communities in Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

The MOU will help IHS to:

- Identify and triage the pediatric specialty service needs for American Indian and Alaska Native children;

- Prioritize clinical specialty service opportunities;
- Determine the critical clinical, operational and technological infrastructure required to provide telehealth services;
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of new models of care delivery;
- Analyze and improve key clinical and operational outcomes; and
- Develop business plans for broader deployment of telehealth and identify potential funding streams.

The MOU will be reviewed annually by IHS and CHOP.

Telehealth services use electronic communications to facilitate the provision of health care. This can include clinical appointments provided remotely, consultation services in which doctors can access experts to consult on difficult cases, as well as nonclinical services such as provider training. In some cases, specialty care furnished through telehealth is supplemented by a nurse or assistant who is physically in the room with the patient. IHS has found that telehealth can be one of the best ways to get health care services where they are needed most.

IHS has found that telehealth can be one of the best avenues to provide health care services where they are most needed, and currently employs telehealth services to meet the needs of some patients in regions across the country.

This partnership builds on IHS efforts to increase access to telehealth programs and services. On September 20, IHS announced a [new contract for \\$6.8 million awarded to Avera Health](#) to provide telemedicine services in all 19 Great Plains Area service units, which serve approximately 130,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives.

In 2009, HIS established the [IHS TeleBehavioral Health Center of Excellence](#) to provide behavioral health services for patients across the Indian health system. The Center works to provide, promote and support the delivery of high quality, culturally competent telebehavioral health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Additionally, the [IHS Teleophthalmology Program](#) was established in 2001 to screen IHS patients across the country for diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in patients with diabetes.

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About the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia:

The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia was founded in 1855 as the nation’s first pediatric hospital. Through its long-standing commitment to providing exceptional patient care, training new generations of pediatric healthcare professionals and pioneering major research initiatives, Children’s Hospital has fostered many discoveries that have benefited children worldwide. Its pediatric research program is among the largest in the country. In addition, its unique family-centered care and public service programs have brought the 535-bed hospital recognition as a leading advocate for children and adolescents. For more information, visit <http://www.chop.edu>.

About the Indian Health Service:

The IHS, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. For more information, visit <http://www.ihs.gov>. Follow IHS on [Facebook](#). For IHS data on pediatric care

among American Indian and Alaska Native children, please consult [Trends in Indian Health: 2014 Edition](#).