



## **Volume 1, Issue 4**

*As part of the PeopleSmart brand and effort to support the recruitment and retention of health care professionals at the local level, the Indian Health Service (IHS) brings you the **Recruitment Insights** series. This issue, the fourth in the series, discusses how you can highlight and promote the advantages of working in your facility to help you find--and keep--the right individuals for your available positions.*

### **In This Issue: Working and Living in the IHS Environment**

#### Identifying the Right Person for the Job and Location

#### Rural Health Care Recruiting

#### Personnel Systems (Federal, Commissioned Corps, Tribal)

## **IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB AND LOCATION**

The IHS is a unique career choice and our talented professionals dedicate their skills to serving the health care needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives. This can be attractive to candidates who wish to serve the needs of an underserved population. Focusing on the personal and professional rewards of an IHS career can help you find the right person for your positions.

When you match the right person to your site, you increase your chances of a successful hire and years of successful retention. Since IHS sites can be located in remote rural areas, it's important to set the correct expectations for your work location and environment. The work in remote rural sites may be foreign to many of our candidates. However, with correct information and expectations, many may enjoy the work and lifestyle that we offer. Discussing these aspects of IHS with your job candidates up front, in an open and in-depth way, can help you distinguish between those who thrive in such environments and those who might not find it to their liking. It is an investment that is well worth its time.

This is where the strength of the IHS Public Health Professions brand--Opportunity Adventure Purpose--can help you. Tell your candidates about the opportunity for an exceptional career in a location that offers an adventurous lifestyle while serving a unique in-need patient population.

## RURAL HEALTH CARE RECRUITING

Rural health care is particularly challenging for the recruitment of health care professionals. In their 2004 paper, *Imbalance in the health workforce*, authors Zurn, Dal Poz, Stilwell and Adams identified many issues that have influenced the role and strategies for recruitment of medical providers, including lifestyle or access to amenities; spousal-related employment opportunities; child-related educational access; and professional, family and social linkages with professional goals.\*

In a 1990 article published in the *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, authors Veitch, Harte, Hays and Pashen, et al. describe the impact of community participation in the recruitment of physicians in hard to fill rural areas with constant physician turnover. The authors outline a method for rejuvenating recruitment in four stages: rapid participatory appraisal; thematic grouping of issues; open community meetings; and subsequent meetings with the community.\*\*

These four stages were utilized in the development of a community action plan for physician recruiting. Some common strategies among the communities utilizing the methods were:

- Forming a liaison committee to interface with other stakeholders
- Developing information packages for prospective applicants
- Forming a welcome process that helps doctors and families settle in
- Addressing quality and appropriateness of housing
- Sponsoring a medical student to spend time in the community
- Considering spouses' education and employment needs

The authors discovered that communities are able to play an important role in the recruiting of physicians. Communication between prospective health care providers and the community can be a crucial factor in rural communities to identify and retain primary care service providers. It may help to educate your candidates beforehand about the community they would be working in to ensure that it will be a good match.

\*Zurn P, Dal Poz M, Stilwell B, Adams O (2004). *Imbalance in the health workforce*. *Human Resources for Health* 2004; 2:13 doi: 10.1186/1478-4491-2-13 pmid: 15377382.

\*\*Veitch, C, Harte, J, Hays, R, Pashen, D, Clark, S. and Professor, A. (1999). *Community participation in the recruitment and retention of rural doctors: methodological and logistical considerations*. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*; 7(4): 206-211.

## PERSONNEL SYSTEMS (Federal, Commissioned Corps, Tribal)

The IHS offers three different personnel systems, each of which offers unique career rewards, competitive compensation based on training and experience, a comprehensive benefits package and specific eligibility requirements. The following brief descriptions of each personnel system can be used in your recruiting efforts. For complete information on the eligibility requirements and benefits of each system, visit the [IHS Careers page](#).

**Federal Civil Service:** This personnel system can be attractive to job candidates who are

interested in generous federal employee benefits and to those with a history of federal employment. This entry path offers career flexibility without multi-year contractual commitments and, because there are no age or physical requirements, it's open to experienced professionals and recent graduates alike.

**US Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps:** Job candidates who express an interest in a long-term career with eligibility for full retirement after only 20 years will be interested in learning about the Commissioned Corps. Be sure to tell job candidates that more than 35 percent of USPHS Commissioned Corps officers work for IHS and receive benefits similar to those provided by the US military services, including a generous vacation package and comprehensive health care benefits.

**Direct Tribal Hire:** Working directly for a Tribe is a unique opportunity that some job candidates will find appealing, particularly those who want to make a difference to a community in need and are inspired by purpose and a sense of mission. Be sure to explain that candidates can accept employment directly with one of the more than 560 federally recognized Tribes throughout 35 US states. American Indian and Alaska Native job candidates are especially suited to this career path. Employment benefits vary depending on the Tribe and the position, but are comparable to those offered by federal personnel systems. Candidates should know that IHS can help them find a position with a Tribal health program, but the candidates must negotiate pay and benefits directly with the Tribe.

*If you have any recruitment strategies and best practices you would like to share, please send them to us at: [Recruitment Insights](#).*



The policy of IHS is to provide preference to qualified American Indian and Alaska Native applicants and employees who are suitable for federal employment in filling vacancies within IHS. IHS is an equal opportunity employer.

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