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Working and Living Within Indian Communities — In this issue we learn how to highlight and promote the advantages of working in your facility to help you find and retain the right individuals with the right skills for your community.

Identifying the Right Candidate for the Job and Location

An Indian health career is a unique and fulfilling vocation — talented health care professionals dedicate their careers to providing health care to medically underserved American Indian and Alaska Native people, often located in rural and remote communities. Many of our clinicians find their work both professionally and personally fulfilling by giving back to the community and practicing among appreciative and deserving patients. By promoting the personal and professional rewards of an Indian health career to prospective applicants, you're more likely to find a candidate who seeks the growth, cultural stimulation and advancement an IHS career has to offer.

When you match the right person to the right community and your site, you increase your chances of a successful hire and years of successful retention. Since Indian health facilities are mainly located in remote, rural areas, it's important to set the correct expectations for your work location and environment. Working in a remote facility may be foreign to many candidates, but if educated upfront about the lifestyle, community, cultural aspects and local services, many will enjoy the work and lifestyle that we offer. Discussing these aspects of an Indian health career with job candidates 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 the time.

For more information, visit the Successful Transitions series of urban to rural transition guidelines available as a brochure, workbook and PowerPoint Presentation [link to pdfs].

In addition, be sure to stress the rewarding opportunities for cultural enlightenment, including learning about and being a part of a rich heritage; enjoying an adventurous lifestyle where opportunities for hiking, skiing, fishing, hunting and other outdoor pursuits are right at their doorstep; and building professional growth working within a patient-centered team environment, all the while serving a unique patient population in some of the most picturesque areas of the country.

Rural Health Care Recruiting



Health professionals who seek careers in Indian health share similar values and perspectives that set the stage for long-term successful careers and fulfilling lives in small town and rural settings. More specifically, people who transition well into Indian health careers and communities have:

An open mind about people, places and institutions — They don't assume that the school system is inferior or that small-town people hold backward attitudes about politics or social issues. They meet people "as they are" without preconceived assumptions.

Energy, passion and talent to complement their professional and personal activities — They're naturally inclined to get involved. Professionally, they enjoy donating their skills and time to community causes, such as organizing blood drives or blood pressure, diabetes and well-baby care awareness-raising events. They work well with others and are eager to help, such as supporting local theatrical productions, coaching youth sports leagues or starting new activities with others in the community with whom they share interests.

Participate enthusiastically with neighbors and community groups — They enjoy the various levels of give-and-take among friends, neighbors and associates, such as working with neighbors on their projects or welcoming help from a neighbor who offers his or her assistance.

A broadness of mind that enjoys mingling with a cross-section of society — They realize that in a small town, they're more likely to interact with a wider range of people from different educational and socio-economic circumstances.

In addition to providing a good fit with a specific team and facility, as a manager, your goal is to ensure that people who come to work in Indian health are well matched for the community and the lifestyle.



Be sure to stress to the candidate that there are several key steps he or she should take before choosing to practice within a rural Indian community. This will ensure a successful long-term match:

- Understand and appreciate the work and lifestyle a rural health career offers before signing on.
- Learn about basic lifestyle options, such as housing, banking, shopping, conveniences, cost-of-living considerations, utilities and others.
- Meet with potential supervisors, colleagues and Tribal representatives at facilities you are considering.
- Learn about the personality of the facility and the types of people for whom you would care and work alongside.
- Visit the community to get a feel for its people, their heritage and traditions and gauge your comfort level to determine how you might fit in.

For additional reference on urban to rural relocation, see *Moving to a Small Town: A Guidebook for Moving from Urban to Rural America*, Urbanska and Levering, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Personnel Systems (Civil service, Direct Tribal/ Urban Indian Hire, Commissioned Corps)

The Indian health care system offers three career paths, 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 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.

Direct Tribal/Urban Indian Hire: Working directly for one of the more than 560 federally recognized Tribes throughout the United States offers clinicians the same opportunities to make a difference and serve a medically underserved patient population. 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.



US Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps: Job candidates who express an interest in a long-term career with eligibility for 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 Indian health programs and receive benefits similar to those provided by the US military services, including a generous vacation package and comprehensive health care benefits.