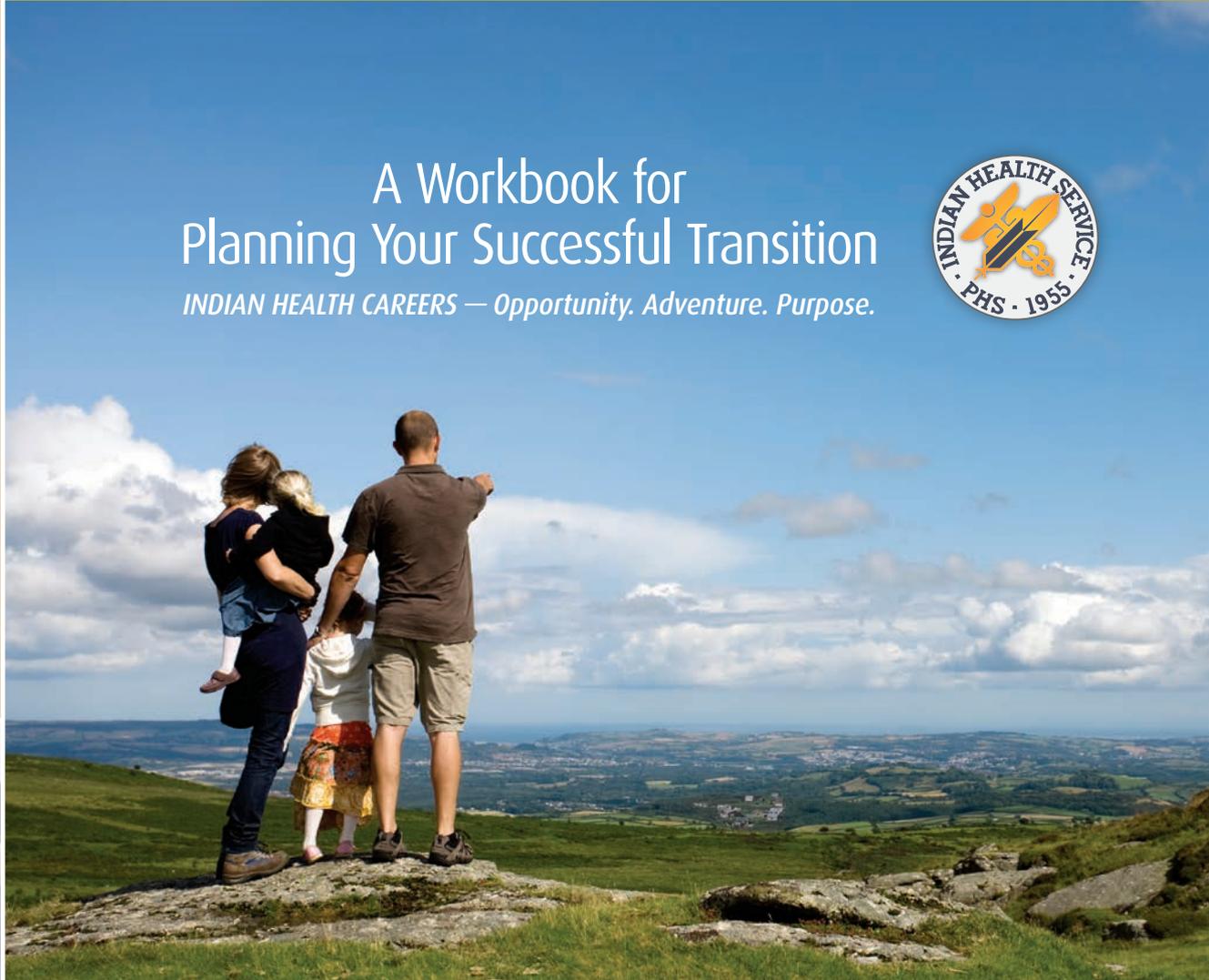


The Indian Health Service (IHS) matches dedicated health professionals like you with opportunities in Indian health communities that serve people who need your care most — in some of the most beautiful areas of the country.

# A Workbook for Planning Your Successful Transition

*INDIAN HEALTH CAREERS — Opportunity. Adventure. Purpose.*





#### OUR MISSION

To raise the physical, mental, social and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

#### OUR GOAL

To ensure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people.

#### OUR FOUNDATION

To uphold the federal government's obligation to promote healthy American Indian and Alaska Native people, communities and cultures and to honor and protect the inherent sovereign rights of Tribes.

# A Culture of Care and Purpose

## A Place for You

You're a unique person with a distinct vision for your future. You envision a career in health care that centers on patient care rather than business concerns and a life where work, family, friends and community are woven together into a balanced whole.

### You value:

The unique cultural experiences our nation has to offer.

### You appreciate:

A slower pace that allows for a deeper, richer experience — at home, within the community and amidst the great outdoors.

### You prefer:

Community activities, arts, crafts or outdoor sports.

An Indian health career is a perfect way for you to accomplish these goals. The Indian Health Service (IHS) matches dedicated health professionals like you with opportunities in Indian health communities that serve people who need your care most — in some of the most beautiful areas of the county.



## The Right Fit

As you search for the right opportunity, we will help you investigate an Indian health career option before you make this major life decision. In addition to providing a good fit with a specific team and facility, our goal is to ensure that you are well matched with an Indian health community and lifestyle.

There are several key steps you can take before you make your decision that will help you establish a successful long-term match:

- Understand and appreciate the work and lifestyle a rural health career offers.
- Learn about basic lifestyle options, such as:
  - Housing
  - Banking
  - Shopping
  - Conveniences
  - Cost-of-living considerations
  - Utilities

- 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 you would care for and work with.
- Visit the community to get a feel for its people and their heritage and traditions.
- Gauge your comfort level and get a feel for how you might fit in.



## Four Points to Consider

This successful transitions planning workbook is designed in four sections:

### 1 A Look Within

*Is small town or rural life for you?*

### 2 Finding Your New Home

*Finding the right fit for you, your family, your career and your lifestyle.*

### 3 Settling In

*Ensuring a smooth transition into your new community.*

### 4 Continued Success

*Enjoying the long-term rewards of an Indian health career.*



Tribal basket maker, Kamilche, Washington.

## A Look Within

### Is small town or rural life for you?

- Your work ethic, passion and compassion define you.
- You like to live life at a slower pace.
- You enjoy meaningful challenges, both personally and professionally.
- You appreciate an opportunity to spend more time with family and friends.
- You seek opportunities to get involved within your facility and your community.
- You appreciate finding new interests and enjoying all that nature has to offer.

### To enjoy an Indian health career, you need:

- An open mind about people, places and institutions.
- Energy, passion and talent to complement your professional and personal activities.
- To participate enthusiastically with neighbors and community groups.
- A broadness of mind that lets you enjoy mingling with a cross-section of society.

## Transition Planning Notes

Your Personal and Professional Passions:

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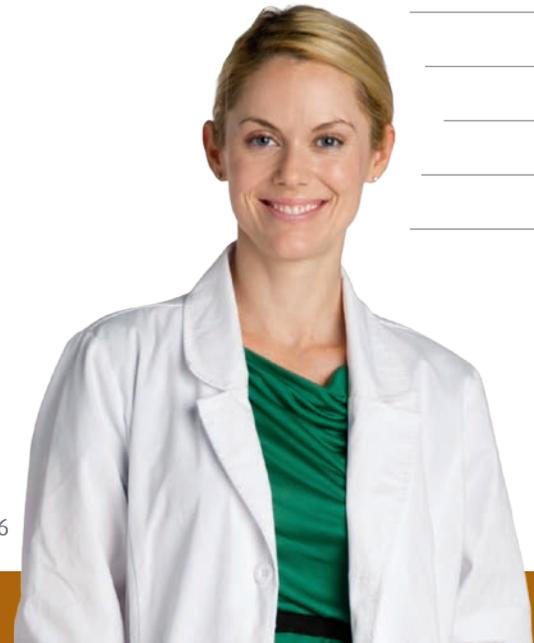
Your Preferred Life Pace:

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*"You really have to enjoy getting out and being part of the community. In the city, you might not know your neighbors' names or see them except for coming and going. In a small town, you get to know people and get involved in each other's lives. You really feel a part of something."*

— Pharmacist, Wyoming

How You Interact with Community:

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What You Enjoy about Diverse People and Cultures:

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*"I think the whole experience of changing directions, coming from a different background, the desire to be part of something bigger — it just comes from within. I was very fortunate to be around the people I worked with and to have the experiences that I had. The patients were so receptive and accepting of me."*

— Physical Therapist, Northern Navajo Medical Center





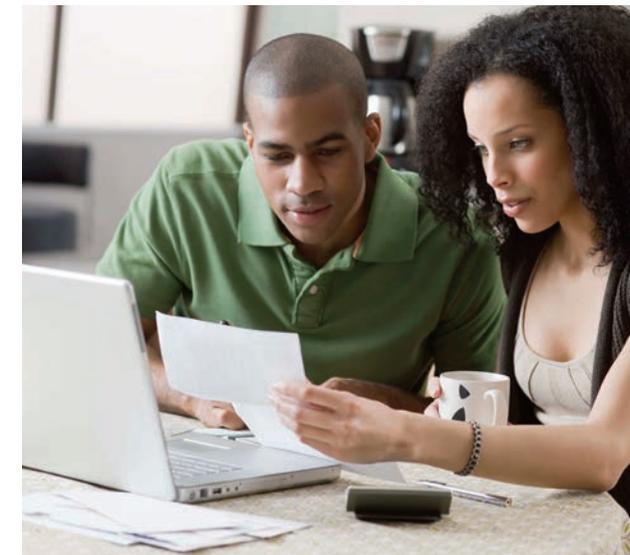
A community in the historic copper mining town of Jerome, Arizona.

## Finding Your New Home

As you seek the best fit for you and your unique situation, it's crucial that you learn all you can about the hospital or clinic, the Tribe or Tribes it serves and the surrounding community, before you decide. Some (but not all) communities served by IHS and Tribal health care providers are among the most remote within the continental United States and Alaska.

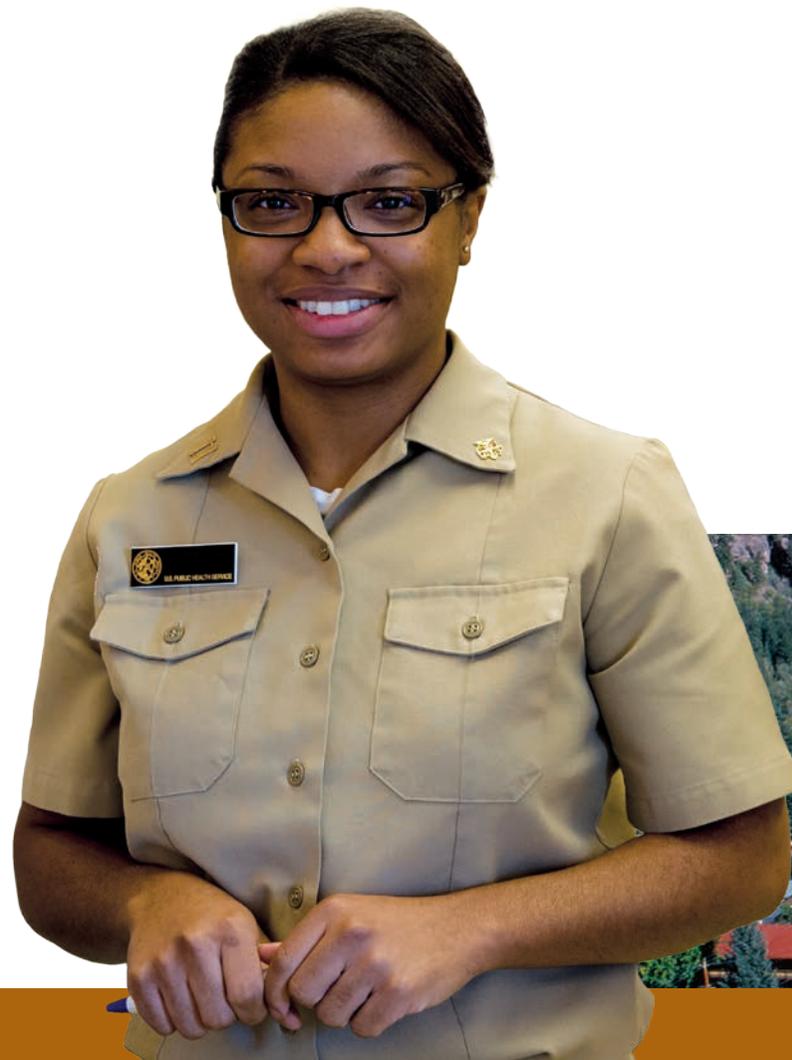
Don't be shy about asking questions or hesitant to search among a variety of communities until you find one that feels right for you and your family. This includes:

- Learning what is available in terms of housing, cost of living expenses, conveniences and simple luxuries.
- Investigating utilities and public infrastructure options, such as:
  - Telephone
  - Gas/Oil
  - Water
  - Local emergency preparedness resources



*“Before your start date, visit the site you’re going to or one like it. There’s really no better way to prepare yourself than to actually go and check out a place before you make your move.”*

— Pharmacist, New Mexico



#### Do your homework —

- Investigate schools and other educational institutions in the area that will fit your needs, as well as those of your family.
- Determine what nearby employment options are available for your spouse or partner.
- Actively seek out information about Tribal customs and mores.
- Discern how well the opportunities match up with your personal and professional expectations.

Indian health professionals find myriad ways to enjoy the changes they make when they leave the city and move to rural areas, such as:

- Adapting expectations.
- Living on the reservation or in housing nearby.
- Building bonds through group/family activities.
- Immersing themselves within the culture.
- Taking advantage of the beautiful surroundings.



## Transition Planning Notes

Schools: \_\_\_\_\_

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Housing: \_\_\_\_\_

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Community Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

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Other Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tribes and Customs: \_\_\_\_\_

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Recreational Opportunities: \_\_\_\_\_

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Paddle to Squaxin Canoe Journey, Olympia, Washington.

## Settling In

With more than 560 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes to serve, how well you fit in solely depends on you. The willingness and ability to take a non-presumptive, open-minded approach to learning about the Native people and their heritage is a significant first step.

Ways to blend in with the community include:

- Learn and research the local customs in advance.
- Participate in local social events and customary observances.
- Participate in school or community sporting activities.
- Show a willingness to become part of the group.
- Allow time to build trust and respect.



## Your Expectations

Local Customs:



Tribal Customs:

Groups and Activities:

Other:

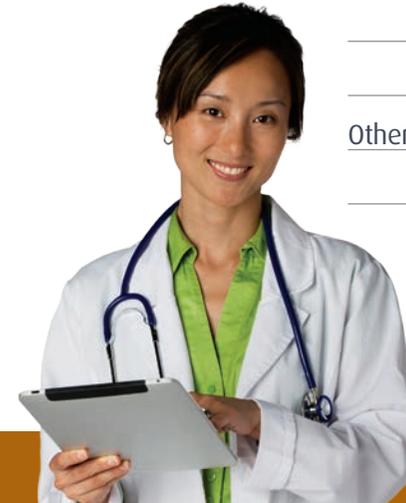
## The Reality

Local Customs:

Tribal Customs:

Groups and Activities:

Other:



*“Showing a basic respect for people and their ways goes a long way toward building a solid working relationship.”*

— Physician, Arizona



Providing patient care, Santa Fe Indian Hospital, New Mexico.

# Continued Success

## Professional challenges

American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to experience health disparities, including:

- A shorter than average life expectancy.
- Significantly higher death rates from:
  - Tuberculosis
  - Diabetes
  - Alcoholism
  - Unintentional injuries

## Common practice issues

- Working with patients who may have trouble with compliance.
- The need for additional support staff.
- Potential challenges in the field:
  - Patient homes without electricity or running water.
  - Long commutes to and from the facility and sporadic access to transportation.
  - Living conditions that complicate care plans.



### Three career options

An Indian health profession career offers three distinct employment paths:

- Federal civil service
- Direct Tribal hire
- US Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps

The civil service and Commissioned Corps offer generous vacation, sick leave, insurance and retirement packages, as well as a possibility for sign-up bonuses. If you work directly for a Tribe, you can negotiate your salary and benefits package to best suit your needs and qualifications.



### Practical advantages of an Indian health career

Having the time to focus on providing care is key to an Indian health career. Clinicians appreciate an opportunity to:

- Focus on patients, not overhead tasks.
- Have steady access to professional development.
- Do less paperwork than in private practice settings.
- Have an option to transfer among facilities nationwide.



### The overall advantages to an Indian health career

- Professional satisfaction
  - Competitive salaries.
  - Good benefits.
  - Opportunities for advancement.
  - Opportunities to transfer.
  - Opportunities to move into advanced practice and administrative-focused careers.
- Personal fulfillment
  - Living and working in some of the nation's most scenic areas.
  - Opportunities to explore new hobbies or activities.
  - Ample opportunities for recreational pursuits (biking, hiking, skiing, climbing, fishing, hunting and more).
  - Providing needed health care to an appreciative and deserving patient population.





A local artisan describes his craft in Kamilche, Washington.

## Conclusion

An Indian health career offers rewards that far outweigh those of a conventional, private-sector practice. Personal fulfillment, professional satisfaction and an appreciation for a unique career path — not to mention enjoying some of our nation's most beautiful country — are the common denominators for successful Indian health professionals.





*"The grass is always greener where you water it. You'll enjoy a happier, more fulfilling experience if you give of yourself to the community as a person and as a neighbor and you allow others to give to you."*

— Radiologist, Arizona

## Successful Transitions Start Here



Visit [ih.gov/findhealthcare](https://www.ih.gov/findhealthcare) and zoom in on the map to explore the communities, hospitals, clinics and health centers located in Indian health communities throughout the United States.

For more information about Indian health careers visit [www.ih.gov/careerops](https://www.ih.gov/careerops).





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