Benjamin Smith

Deputy Director

Indian Health Service

Benjamin Smith, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, is the deputy director for the Indian Health Service. The IHS, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the principal federal health care provider and health advocate for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

As deputy director, Smith leads IHS operations to ensure the delivery of quality comprehensive health services and that IHS services are integrated across all levels of the agency. The IHS deputy director facilitates collaboration between IHS and tribes to increase access to quality health programs, and assists with the development of standardized metrics and monitoring progress of goals to ensure that quality standards are being achieved throughout the Indian health system. Smith also ensures IHS services are integrated across all levels of the agency and engaged with other operating divisions of the Department of Health and Human Services and external partners, including states and national organizations.

Smith most recently served as IHS acting director from January to November of 2025. He previously served as the deputy director for intergovernmental affairs at IHS headquarters since November 2016, where he provided leadership on tribal and urban Indian health activities, in particular the implementation of the Title I and Title V authorities under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act and Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. He has also served as the director of the IHS Office of Tribal Self Governance, where he oversaw all aspects of the administration of the Tribal Self-Governance Program.

Prior to his federal service, Smith worked as a self-governance specialist for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, performing research, advisory services and consultation on health programs with national, state, and local health departments.

Throughout his career, Smith has received numerous awards, including the 2020 National Public Service Award from the American Society for Public Administration, which congratulates the work of public service and public good, and including the 2014 Arthur S. Flemming Award from the George Washington University Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, which honors outstanding federal employees for their exceptional contributions to the federal government. He has also received several IHS National Director's Awards for his contributions to tribal consultation activities, IHS Strategic Plan updates, and the agency lead negotiators curriculum.

Smith received his Master of Business Administration from George Washington University, a Master of Arts in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Brigham Young University. He is also one of the Navajo Nation's Chief Manuelito Scholars.