

January 27, 2021

Dear Tribal Leaders and Representatives:

Recently, the Biden Administration released a new [National Strategy for COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness](#) as well as a number of Executive Orders aimed at curbing the spread of the virus. A fact sheet that highlights the national strategy can be found [here](#).

In addition, last Friday, the Department of Health and Human Services Acting Secretary, Norris Cochran sent a [letter notifying the extension of the Public Health Emergency for COVID-19](#) for another 90 days but also stated that it will likely remain in place for the rest of 2021 and when a decision is made to terminate the declaration or let it expire, HHS will provide 60 days' notice prior to termination. In light of the PHE extension, you can expect the continued use of telemedicine and other emergency authorities, including Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act declarations and emergency use authorizations (EUA) for diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines.

Executive Actions

[Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and strengthening the nation-to-nation relationship](#) The Memorandum reaffirms the Presidential Memorandum of November 5, 2009 (Tribal Consultation), which requires each agency to prepare and periodically update a detailed plan of action to implement the policies and directives of Executive Order 13175 (Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments). HHS remains committed to honoring the nation-to-nation relationship between the United States and Tribes and strengthening the [HHS Tribal Consultation Policy](#) in consultation with Tribal governments.

New Steps to Boost Vaccine Supply and Increase Transparency for States, Tribes, and Territories: Today, the President announced [bold steps that will help meet the goal of administering 100 million shots in 100 days and ramp up vaccine supply as fast as possible](#). As a result of these actions, the federal government will have enough vaccine supply for the entire U.S. population by the end of the summer. The President is taking the following actions today:

- An Increase in Weekly Vaccine Supply to States, Tribes and Territories
- Increased Transparency for States, Tribes, and Territories to Help Their Vaccination Efforts
- Purchase of 200 Million Additional Doses to Be Delivered This Summer, Double the Nation's Vaccine Supply

Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Non-Immigrants Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease: President Biden has determined that it is in the interests of the United States to [take action to restrict and suspend the entry into the United States, as immigrants or nonimmigrants, of noncitizens of the United States](#) who were physically present within the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the Federative Republic of Brazil, and the Republic of South Africa during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States. CDC in close coordination with DHS, has determined that the

Republic of South Africa is experiencing widespread, ongoing person-to-person transmission of COVID-19, including a variant strain of the virus known as B.1.351. Another variant strain, known as B.1.1.7, is widely circulating and has been traced to the United Kingdom. Furthermore, a third variant strain, which is known as B.1.1.28.1 and may impact the potential for re-infection, has been identified in Brazil.

[Executive Order on Economic relief related to the COVID-19 pandemic](#). All executive departments and agencies shall promptly identify actions they can take within existing authorities to address the current economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. Agencies should specifically consider actions that facilitate better use of data and other means to improve access to, reduce unnecessary barriers to, and improve coordination among programs funded in whole or in part by the Federal Government.

[Executive Order that will launch an all-of-government effort to provide equitable emergency economic relief](#) to working families, communities, and small businesses across the nation. The actions taken as part of this effort will provide relief to millions of American workers who have lost their jobs and had their hours or wages slashed through no fault of their own.

[Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers](#). Among the provisions in the order, the Secretary of HHS shall: facilitate the collection of data needed to inform the safe reopening; ensure that supplies are equitably distributed to schools; support the development and operation of contact tracing programs at the State, local, Tribal, and territorial level; provide guidance needed for child care providers and Head Start programs for safely reopening and operating; and provide technical assistance to States, localities, Tribes, and territories to support the accelerated distribution of Federal COVID-19 relief funds.

[Executive Order on Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery](#). In the order, HHS will be responsible for a COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force tasked with providing recommendations for mitigating the health inequities caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and for preventing such inequities in the future. The Secretary of HHS shall also provide recommendations on contact tracing in hardest hit communities and conducting outreach to promote vaccine trust and uptake among communities of color and other underserved populations.

[Executive Order on establishing the COVID-19 Pandemic Testing board and ensuring a sustainable public health workforce for COVID-19 and other biological threats](#). To control COVID-19, the Administration will use a Government-wide, unified approach that includes: establishing a national COVID-19 testing and public health workforce strategy; working to expand the supply of tests; working to bring test manufacturing to the United States, where possible; working to enhance laboratory testing capacity; working to expand the public health workforce; supporting screening testing for schools and priority populations; and ensuring a clarity of messaging about the use of tests and insurance coverage.

[Executive Order on protecting workers' health and safety.](#) Ensuring the health and safety of workers is a national priority and a moral imperative. Healthcare workers and other essential workers, many of whom are people of color and immigrants, have put their lives on the line during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the policy of the Biden Administration to protect the health and safety of workers from COVID-19. This will require issuing science-based guidance to help keep workers safe from COVID-19 exposure, including with respect to mask-wearing; partnering with State and local governments to better protect public employees; enforcing worker health and safety requirements; and pushing for additional resources to help employers protect employees.

[Executive Order on a sustainable public health supply chain.](#) This order directs immediate actions to secure supplies necessary for responding to the pandemic, so that those supplies are available, and remain available, to the Federal Government and State, local, Tribal, and territorial authorities, as well as to America's health care workers, health systems, and patients. These supplies are vital to the Nation's ability to reopen its schools and economy as soon and safely as possible.

[Executive Order on ensuring a data-driven response to COVID-19 and future high-consequence public health threats.](#) It is the policy of the Administration to respond to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic through effective approaches guided by the best available science and data, including by building back a better public health infrastructure.

[Executive Order on improving and expanding access to care and treatments for COVID-19.](#) The Administration will improve the capacity of the Nation's healthcare systems to address coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), to accelerate the development of novel therapies to treat COVID-19, and to improve all Americans' access to quality and affordable healthcare.

[Executive Order on promoting COVID-19 safety in domestic and international travel.](#) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Surgeon General, and the National Institutes of Health have concluded that mask-wearing, physical distancing, appropriate ventilation, and timely testing can mitigate the risk of travelers spreading COVID-19.

[Executive Order on organizing and mobilizing the US government to provide a unified and effective response to combat COVID-19 and to provide United States leadership on global health and security.](#) This order creates the position of Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response and Counselor to the President and takes other steps to organize the White House and activities of the Federal Government to combat COVID-19 and prepare for future biological and pandemic threats.

HHS Departmental Updates

- **Staff Changes:** Under the Biden Administration, HHS has announced a number of new Appointed and [Acting leadership](#) changes. We are pleased to announce that Marvin Figueroa is the new Director of the Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, where the Tribal

Affairs team is situated. Norris Cochran is the Acting Secretary of HHS, and Elizabeth Fowler is the new Acting Director of IHS. Elizabeth Carr is the new Senior Advisor to the Director at IHS.

- **CMS Updates:** On January 15th, [CMS extended the grace period](#) previously granted to Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities, and facilities operated by Tribes and Tribal organizations under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), which permits IHS and Tribal facilities to claim Medicaid reimbursement under the clinic services benefit at 42 C.F.R. § 440.90 (including at the IHS All Inclusive Rate) for services provided outside of the “four walls” of the facility.
- CMS recently hosted and recorded [a webinar on continuing Medicaid and CHIP outreach during COVID-19](#). The webinar highlights the importance of creating opportunities for outreach and helping enrollment assisters understand eligibility verification flexibilities.
- **ACF Update:** Last week the ACF’s Children’s Bureau issued an [information Memorandum](#) related to additional funding that will be available this year.

Vaccine Updates

- **COVID-19 Vaccine:** CDC updated their [resource page on the COVID-19 vaccine](#). On this page you can find information on vaccine data, where to receive the vaccine, and more. CDC updated information pages on the [Moderna vaccine](#) and the [Pfizer vaccine](#).
- **IHS Vaccine Distribution:** As of January 26, the IHS has administered more than 158,784 individual COVID-19 vaccine doses (131,481 first doses and 25,502 second doses), this is 44% of the 357,950 COVID-19 vaccines that were shipped to IHS facilities. The national vaccination rate is 53% (23,540,994 vaccine doses administered and 44,394,075 doses distributed). Currently, 339 IHS direct, tribal health programs, and urban Indian organizations have chosen to receive COVID-19 vaccine from IHS. On weekly basis, IHS receives approximately 1.6% of the total vaccine need as a jurisdiction and has received a total of 12.4% to date; this is equitably distributed based on priority populations to [IHS Areas](#). As of January 26, IHS received a 16% increase in allocation (5,400 additional Moderna doses). For updates, please visit the [IHS COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution List](#) for a list of facilities receiving vaccine from IHS and visit the [CDC COVID Data Tracker](#) for information on overall US vaccine distribution and administration.
- **Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines:** CDC has updated their page on [building confidence in the COVID-19 vaccines](#). Some people may hesitate to get a COVID-19 vaccine. They may want answers to their questions about the process for developing and authorizing these vaccines and information about their safety and effectiveness. People may have previous experiences that affect their trust and confidence in the health system.
- **Vaccination Toolkits:** CDC updated their [Vaccine toolkits](#). These toolkits provide audience-specific resources for healthcare teams and community administrators.

- **What to Expect at Your Vaccine Appointment:** Because COVID-19 is a new disease with new vaccines, you may have questions about what happens before, during, and after your appointment to get vaccinated. [This page](#) will help you know what to expect when you get vaccinated, what information your provider will give you, and resources you can use to monitor your health after you are vaccinated.
- **Frequently Asked Questions about the COVID-19 Vaccines:** CDC updated [their page with frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccination](#).
- CDC updated their [interim considerations on intervals between the first and second dose](#). The second dose should be administered as close to the recommended interval as possible. However, if it is not feasible to adhere to the recommended interval, the second dose of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines may be scheduled for administration up to 6 weeks (42 days) after the first dose.
- As a reminder, on November 18, 2020, IHS issued the [IHS COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan November 2020](#)
- Please continue to visit the [IHS Vaccine Distribution webpage](#) for the latest information on Vaccine distribution efforts and resources.

Resources

- [CDC Resource page on the COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Toolkit for Community-Based Organizations](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Toolkit for Essential Workers](#)
- [CDC Guidance on expanding screening tests to reduce the spread of COVID-19.](#)
- [CDC Updated Information on SARS-CoV-2 testing in the workplace](#)
- [CDC Communication resources for travelers](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Rapid Assessment of Point of Entry Capacity](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Schools and Child Care](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Teachers and Staff](#)
- [CDC Toolkit for K-12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Rural Communities](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Community Organizations and Gatherings](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for People who have pets](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for People with Moderate to Severe Asthma](#)
- [CDC Resource Page for Case investigation & contact tracing staff](#)
- [CDC Trainings for healthcare professionals](#)

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions!

Tribal Affairs Team

Office of the Secretary | Intergovernmental and External Affairs

Department of Health and Human Services