

**INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
2019 RICK SMITH INJURY PREVENTION AWARD
CDR ROBERT MORONES**

CDR Robert Morones, REHS, MPH, was nominated by the Phoenix Area Indian Health Service (IHS), Office of Environmental Health and Engineering (OEHE), Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) for the 2019 Rick Smith Injury Prevention Award. Since January 2018 CDR Morones has served as the Phoenix Area Injury Prevention Specialist with the responsibility of managing one of the agency's largest and most comprehensive IP programs serving 9 IHS OEHE field offices, 25+ IHS Environmental Health staff, and 46 tribes with a 240K population in the four-state region of Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and California. His expertise and commitment to the IHS mission assure the delivery of services in injury epidemiology, partnership building, training/capacity building, and community-based prevention projects to reduce the risks and incidence of injury in tribal communities.

CDR Morones demonstrates the enthusiasm, dedication, and leadership in advancing the IHS Injury Prevention Program at the local, regional, and nation level. Achievements that merit consideration of CDR Morones for this high honor include:

Capacity Building: CDR Morones consistently and unselfishly contributes to the skill and career development of his peers and junior public health practitioners. In addition to his responsibilities as the supervisor of 3 full-time IHS District IP Coordinators, he is the formal mentor to two current IHS Injury Prevention Fellowship participants and informal mentor to two additional current Fellowship participants in the Phoenix Area. He is a principle IP mentor to 8 tribal staff operating Tribal Injury Prevention Cooperative Agreement Program (TIPCAP) funded programs and approximately 20 IHS field-based DEHS staff members in the Area. With nearly 20 years of IHS experience, 15 of which in IP specific positions, CDR Morones is considered by IHS and Tribal peers throughout the country as a valued mentor, advisor, and injury prevention subject matter expert.

Injury Prevention Program Visibility: CDR Morones assured high visibility for IHS IP program accomplishments in 2019 by coauthoring four presentations at professional conferences, including three at the national level (National AI/NA Injury Prevention Conf.; National Council on Aging Conf.; and Commissioned Officers' Foundation Scientific Symposium). CDR Morones is the principle IHS representative and fall prevention subject matter expert on the National Council on Aging's AI/AN/Hawaiian Evidence-Based Program Advisory Council on Elder Falls and at the regional level is the Phoenix Area's representative on the Arizona Falls Prevention Coalition.

Safe Native American Passengers (SNAP) Program Coordinator: In 2003 the IHS created the SNAP Course: a one of a kind culturally appropriate 12-hour course taught in remote tribal settings to bolster child passenger safety (CPS) competencies among community-based safety and health practitioners. From 2011-present, CDR Morones has served as the national SNAP Program Coordinator with responsibilities in assuring the curriculum reflects the latest CPS legislative and science-based recommendations; serves as subject matter expert in accessing and teaching the curriculum; and markets the course nationally to IHS and tribal stakeholders. He led a comprehensive evaluation of the SNAP program resulting: (1) a 2015 course revision incorporating newly released

federal safety seat design and installation standards; (2) developed an internet-based method to distribute curriculum to instructors and register students; and (3) developed an online course evaluation for student and instructor input for ongoing curriculum improvement. During his tenure, an average of 20 courses/yr have been completed by nearly 2,000 persons across the country representing tribes in all IHS Areas. Through SNAP, a cadre of CPS advocates have emerged to lead CPS educational campaigns, safety seat distribution programs, and the enactment of CPS tribal laws – contributing to advancements in reducing MVC risks among AI/AN children. For example, in the Phoenix Area IHS child safety seat use has increased by 25% in the past 10 years.

Community-based Opioid Poison Prevention: The national opioid epidemic has mobilized the public health community to implement treatment and prevention measures. Recognizing most IHS activities were directed at the clinical environment, CDR Morones took the initiative to lead Phoenix Area's efforts to establish community-based opioid poisoning prevention strategies. He assembled a group of 50+ IHS staff and tribal community-health personnel to identify what could be done at the community level. Through extensive formative work among the target population in 10 tribal communities, he led the team in the development of several innovative pilot projects including a home-based medication safeguarding pilot project and community-based medication disposal activities. The medication safeguarding project utilized focus groups to identify safeguarding mechanisms and their potential acceptance among the tribal elder population. This resulted in the installation of 55 medication lock boxes in the homes of elders in nine tribal communities. After a 60-day follow-up with the participants, the percent of those locking their medications went from 2% at baseline to 95%. With a goal of utilizing what was learned from the pilot project to inform the implementation of large scaled medication lockbox initiatives, CDR Morones and his team presented the project findings at stakeholder/partner meetings, professional conferences, newsletters, and have prepared a manuscript for publication in a professional journal. As a result, four additional Phoenix Area tribes have implemented large scale lockbox programs, three other IHS Areas have duplicated the project, and Johns Hopkins University has received CDC funds to establish a national medication lockbox program to serve tribal communities.

Complementing the medication safeguarding project, CDR Morones led the team to identify methods to reduce the amount of excess, unused, or expired medications in the home environment. While clinical facilities have drug-take back programs, he identified that only 20% of elderly properly dispose of medications. CDR Morones established partnerships with the state health agencies (AZ and NV) to assist tribes with the acquisition of 1,300 medication neutralization pouches at no cost and the placement of medication disposal boxes in tribal healthcare facilities. To date, medications have been disposed of in approximately 600 homes and 750 pounds of medications collected in drop boxes. Additionally, the proportion of elders dumping/flushing medications reduced from 27% to 12%.

CDR Morones is one of the Agency's foremost IP experts whose dedication and leadership merits the awarding of the 2019 Rick Smith Injury Prevention Award.