



JUN - 2 2004

Indian Health Service
Rockville MD 20852

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Indian Health Service (IHS) first adopted the first Tribal Consultation and Participation Policy in 1997. In 2001, we implemented a revised Tribal Consultation Policy based on 4 years of experience with our initial policy and our continuing discussions with Tribal Leaders concerning consultation activities with the IHS.

Recently the IHS surveyed Tribal leaders, Tribal health directors, and Urban Leaders to assess how consultation activities with the IHS are regarded. Although the survey results have indicated a general satisfaction with the IHS consultation policy and procedures, a significant number of Tribal Leaders recommended to me that the IHS policy should be reviewed again to identify and implement improvements in the manner in which we consult with Tribes.

Late last year, Ms. Regina Schofield, the Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), solicited the nomination of members to serve on a workgroup to consider revisions to the HHS consultation policy. Ms. Schofield recently selected members to this workgroup, which includes representatives from each of the 12 IHS Areas as well as several national Indian organizations. I have expressed an interest in using this workgroup to develop possible recommended revisions to the IHS consultation policy as well, and Ms. Schofield has agreed to my request. Consequently, this workgroup will be charged to develop recommendations on revising both the IHS and HHS policies. Ms. Schofield and I believe this approach will be an efficient use of the workgroup members' time as well as an economical use of Federal resources.

I have enclosed a list of the workgroup members for your information. After the workgroup submits its recommendations regarding the IHS consultation policy, I will forward the recommendations to Tribal Leaders and others for review and comment. I will also require that consultation on any proposed policy revision occur at Area-wide and national meetings. My goal is to adopt any revisions to the IHS policy by late fall.

I have asked Mr. Douglas Black, Director, Office of Tribal Programs, to be the IHS coordinator of this effort. Mr. Black will work in close collaboration with the Director of the Office of Tribal Self-Governance and the Director of the Urban Indian Health Program, both of whom will actively participate in this effort.

Thank you for your continued support and assistance in improving the consultation process.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Grim, DDS
Charles W. Grim, D.D.S., M.H.S.A.
Assistant Surgeon General
Director

Enclosure