

Strategic Plan

Mission: Improve access to high quality, culturally competent health services for Urban Indians. The Indian Health Service (IHS), Office of Urban Indian Health Programs (OUIHP) carries out this mission in support of the broader IHS mission: “to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians to the highest level.”

Vision: Together with our valued Urban Indian Organization (UIO) partners, the IHS strives to develop health care solutions that fit the diverse circumstances of Urban Indians and their communities, while ensuring accountability. The IHS seeks to support currently IHS-funded UIOs in their efforts to improve capacity to serve Urban Indians and to lay the groundwork to serve Urban Indians in other communities.

Guiding Principles:

- Unity of purpose among IHS and UIOs to actively improve access to culturally competent, quality care for Urban Indians.
- A strong confer process to ensure high levels of collaboration and communication.
- Meaningful and effective partnerships with national organizations, other Federal agencies, states, health care providers, Tribes, insurers, and non-profit organizations to leverage Federal funds for Urban Indians.
- A mutual understanding of the importance of modernizing and reforming to improve health care programs and of integrating behavioral health with primary care.
- Measureable outcomes through results-driven approaches and data utilization to establish transparency and accountability with regard to the health care services provided by UIOs to Urban Indians.
- Activities conducted in a manner that is fair and inclusive.

Goals and Objectives: Performance of the Mission depends on the committed efforts of IHS and UIOs, especially those UIOs receiving IHS funding, in a coordinated and committed effort. This understanding of mission performance is reflected in the two overarching goals of this strategic plan. Goal One is to support currently IHS-funded UIOs in their efforts to address the key challenges they identified for improving and expanding their capacity to improve access to quality, culturally competent health services for Urban Indians. Goal Two is to build the administrative capacity of OUIHP, for example, to establish performance-based oversight within IHS as well as for the IHS-funded UIOs and to transition administration of the former National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) awards.

Under these two overarching goals, the strategic plan encompasses a range of actions intended to advance seven strategic objectives. Actions may be undertaken directly by OUIHP and/or in partnership with others, including IHS Headquarter senior leadership, IHS Area Offices and Service Units, UIOs, other organizations that receive IHS funding, other Federal agencies, Tribes, states, and others. This plan assumes the involvement of the awardee of the Urban Indian Education and Research Organization Cooperative Agreement (hereinafter “Cooperative Agreement”).

GOAL 1: SUPPORT CURRENTLY IHS-FUNDED UIOS' EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE KEY CHALLENGES THEY IDENTIFIED FOR IMPROVING AND EXPANDING ACCESS TO CARE FOR URBAN INDIANS

Objective 1.1: Support UIOs' efforts to diversify funding and increase third-party reimbursements to ensure UIOs' sustainability.

Strategy: Provide technical assistance to UIOs seeking funding/reimbursements, including assistance with:

- Demonstrating eligibility for reimbursement from funders and insurers;
- Negotiating agreements with the Veterans Administration (VA) to enable billing the VA for eligible care delivered to veterans;
- Identifying grant opportunities and resources to support grant writing; and
- Assisting UIOs in the accreditation process.

Strategy: Support extension of 100% Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) to UIOs as requested in the FY 2017 President's budget.¹

Objective 1.2: Support UIOs' efforts to attract and retain skilled, culturally competent health services providers.

Strategy: Pursue opportunities to facilitate the use of both the IHS and the National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan repayment programs to meet the unique needs of UIOs.

Objective 1.3: Increase awareness and actively seek support for the health care needs of Urban Indians.

Strategy: Continue efforts to educate IHS and other Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) agencies about the opportunities for UIOs to advance health care goals and initiatives and work with these agencies to facilitate UIOs' involvement in these goals and initiatives, as authorized, including access to funding and other resources.

Strategy: Provide UIOs with the knowledge and tools needed to participate effectively in the IHS confer processes to the maximum extent practicable.

Strategy: Support UIOs' efforts to build partnerships with Tribes.

- Continue efforts to improve the collection of data on the Tribal affiliation of patients served by UIOs, to help communicate the role of UIOs in serving Tribal communities, and to facilitate productive working relationships with Tribes.

Strategy: Establish an ongoing process to identify and prioritize challenges that limit access to health care by Urban Indians and develop strategies to overcome or mitigate challenges.

¹ FY 2017 Budget Justification at CJ-134, CJ-229, CJ-230.

Objective 1.4: Strengthen the capacity of UIOs to work as a community to improve knowledge sharing.

Strategy: Assess options for strengthening networking among UIOs, such as facilitating the development of online communities of interest, to help meet technical assistance needs (e.g., allowing new UIO staff to tap the knowledge of more experienced staff in the community).

GOAL 2: INCREASE OUIHP'S ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

Objective 2.1: Build capacity for OUIHP to transfer administration of the former NIAAA awards.

Strategy: Develop a plan for the transition of administration of the former NIAAA awards.

Strategy: Take steps to integrate UIOs receiving former NIAAA awards into OUIHP policies, procedures, funding allocations, and the program monitoring and assessment system (discussed under Objective 2.2 below) and, as appropriate, adapt elements of the system (e.g., reporting requirements and annual on-site program reviews) to reflect the distinctive features of the former NIAAA awardees.

Objective 2.2: Lay the groundwork for performance-based oversight, both within IHS and for the IHS-funded UIOs.

Strategy: Improve the quality and relevance of the data collected regarding health care services provided to Urban Indians by IHS-funded UIOs and the budgetary needs for improving access to health care for Urban Indians, including the Uniform Data System (UDS), Integrated Data Collection System (IDCS), and Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and GRPA Modernization Act (GPRAMA):

- Automate the UDS and IDCS reporting process and provide related training to UIOs. Review UDS and IDCS reporting requirements for possible changes needed to reflect distinctive services provided by UIOs, including the former NIAAA awardees.
- Take steps to help UIOs use UDS and IDCS data to improve performance (to replace efforts formerly conducted under a contract).

Strategy: Improve the consistency, usefulness, and efficiency of on-site program reviews:

- Explore options to help improve consistent, high-quality program reviews and timely corrective actions, such as the feasibility of centralizing responsibility for on-site program reviews in OUIHP;
- Examine on-site program review requirements and processes for opportunities to ensure they reflect the circumstances of different UIO types, including former NIAAA awardees; and
- Examine the program review process to identify opportunities to reduce the burden on UIOs (e.g., automation of paper processes).

Strategy: Standardize contract requirements for UIOs nationwide to enable monitoring program performance against a common baseline.

Strategy: Improve the transparency of the budget process and the transparency and accountability for funds allocated to the Urban Indian health.

- Explore options for incorporating a budget-specific conferring session in the IHS budget process.
- Increase transparency for funds allocated in the IHS budget to Urban Indian health, such as identifying amounts for OUIHP and IHS Area Office administration, for technical assistance and information technology support, and for the contracts, grants, and cooperative agreement(s) awarded.
- Develop a methodology for allocating future increases to the IHS budget for Urban Indian health.

Objective 2.3: Extend OUIHP staff capacity by expanding staff and maximizing partnerships and resources. Ensure IHS has available staff to perform the roles of OUIHP and support the IHS mission regarding Urban Indian health.

Strategy: Leverage capabilities of IHS, other Federal agencies, the Cooperative Agreement awardee, and the Urban Indian community.

- Work collaboratively with other IHS offices (e.g., the Loan Repayment Program) and DHHS agencies (e.g., the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Health Resources and Services Administration, etc.) where missions, goals, and authorities overlap;
- Actively manage the Cooperative Agreement to supplement OUIHP staff capacity in specified task areas, including public policy; research and data; training and technical assistance; education, public relations, and marketing;
- Support networking among UIOs, such as online communities of interest; and
- Ensure IHS has available staff to perform the roles of OUIHP and support the IHS mission regarding Urban Indian health.

Implementation of the strategic plan is subject to the availability of resources and applicable Federal law, including the IHCA. Nothing in the strategic plan creates a right of action against the Federal government, including DHHS and IHS, for failure to implement any portion of the strategic plan.