



DEC 20 2018

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to let you know that the Indian Health Service (IHS) will publish a notice of a Headquarters reorganization in the *Federal Register* on Wednesday, December 26.

This reorganization comprises one component of the IHS reorganization that was proposed 2 years ago. That proposal was intended to improve operations and oversight through two focus areas: (1) strengthening the Headquarters organizational structure to support changing priorities, including quality improvement and strategic workforce development; and (2) strengthening senior staff accountability for accomplishing the objectives of the work priorities of IHS. The proposal included the establishment of three new Headquarters Offices and three new Deputy Director positions. The IHS consulted on the proposal from October 2016 through January 2017, and we received many supportive comments about the conceptual structure that was proposed. There were also concerns expressed about the cost of the new structure and impact to Tribal shares.

In light of the concerns expressed and a review of the feasibility of implementing that reorganization without additional resources, the IHS is moving forward with establishing an Office of Quality (OQ) within IHS Headquarters as the current critical need, which will be overseen by the Deputy Director for Quality Health Care. The IHS has been working to confront quality of care challenges as indicated in reports to Congress from the U.S. General Accountability Office (GAO) and the Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG). The reasons are systemic, but the primary concern is the limited oversight function for quality assurance within IHS Headquarters. The OQ is intended to provide a central focus for Agency-wide coordination of quality assurance activities. In addition, the IHS is transferring the key role of agency liaison for the purpose of responding to, and managing external oversight inquiries to the Immediate IHS Office of the Director.

This reorganization is not budget neutral. Some existing staff will be moved into the new OQ, but hiring additional staff will be required as well to accomplish the purpose of this reorganization. The IHS will staff the new OQ as additional funds become available through appropriated funding increases.

Thank you for your support of this effort to ensure the provision of quality health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Sincerely,

/Michael D. Weahkee/

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