



March 9, 2020

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

I want to thank you for joining the Indian Health Service on last week's All Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leader Call with the White House, [Department of Health and Human Services](#), and the bureaus of [Indian Affairs](#) and [Indian Education](#) within the [Department of Interior](#), to discuss novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

Many federal leaders joined the call and shared the work they are doing to update the public and minimize the impact to normal operations. Tyler Fish, senior policy advisor and tribal liaison at the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, opened the call by expressing his commitment and support to tribal communities. Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney shared that her office has established an emergency management planning team which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of its pandemic plan, and here at the Indian Health Service we have activated our Incident Command Structure to mitigate any negative impacts of COVID-19 on IHS operations. The BIE is also providing assistance to schools to ensure Emergency Management Plans are updated.

During our call, tribal leaders voiced concerns related to the deployment of U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officers to assist with COVID-19 response activities. The Department of Health and Human Services is committed to following recommended quarantine guidelines as specified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC interim guidance is available on the CDC [web site](#).

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. We must be vigilant in our efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of infections within the communities that we serve. The federal government is working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, as well as with other public health partners, to respond to this public health threat. We will continue to keep you updated as developments arise.

As we move into spring, many of you may be planning or attending mass gatherings or large community events. The CDC has [interim guidance](#) for event organizers. CDC strongly encourages event organizers to prepare for the possibility of outbreaks in their communities. Creating an emergency plan for mass gatherings and large community events can help protect you and your community.

You can find useful and up to date information at [cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19). CDC has [frequently asked](#)

[questions](#) and answers on its website. I encourage you to explore these resources. IHS is also reviewing the questions that we received during the call that we were not able to answer due to time constraints. We will develop FAQs based on those questions and post them to [our website](#). We are also communicating regularly with our providers, and last week we hosted a call for all IHS employees to ensure they are receiving the most up to date information available.

We hope you will join us again on Thursday, March 12 at 3:30 pm ET for our [next call on this important topic](#). We will continue to provide updates on COVID-19 to tribal and urban Indian organization leaders every Thursday during the month of March.

Respectfully,

Michael

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