



OCT 4 2021

Dear Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to continue Urban Confer to seek your input and recommendations on the draft Indian Health Service (IHS) Policy on Conferring with Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs).

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) requires that the IHS “confer,” to the maximum extent practicable, with UIOs in carrying out the IHCIA. Accordingly, to be consistent with IHCIA authority, the IHS established the Urban Confer Policy in Part 5, Chapter 26 of the *Indian Health Manual*. Your input helps improve the Agency’s policy and practices to engage UIOs better and conduct meaningful Urban Confer.

On June 9, 2021, the IHS hosted a virtual Urban Confer session with Urban Indian Organization Leaders that sought your input on improving the Urban Confer Policy. There were six comments forwarded through the Urban Confer link for IHS review. We also summarize comments you provided during the virtual Confer session.

In general, commenters recommended the following revisions to the Urban Confer Policy:

- Change the IHS response time from 60 calendar days to 30 calendar days for a more timely response to strengthen the policy and establish a best practice.
- Apply consistent Urban Confer methods and clarify responsibilities at all IHS levels for better engagement with UIOs.
- Incorporate virtual platforms to enhance the face-to-face Urban Confer experience and maximize participation to ensure Urban Indian Organization Leaders are heard.
- Establish a standardized comment period of 60 calendar days from posting of an Urban Indian Organization Leader Letter to ensure UIOs can submit comments on issues that affect health care needs.
- Evaluate the Urban Confer process to better understand the effectiveness of implementation of the Urban Confer Policy to improve the IHS response to critical issues.
- Provide a report (excluding contract and grant issues) to UIOs similar to the Urban Confer report submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Based on your recommendations, we are providing a revised draft Urban Confer Policy for your review, input, and recommendations. The enclosed draft Urban Confer Policy includes footnotes to provide guidance on revisions to the draft policy to assist in your review. As a next step, the IHS will host an Urban Confer session to continue discussions on revisions to the Urban Confer Policy.

URBAN CONFER SESSION (VIRTUAL): I encourage you to provide comments and recommendations on the enclosed draft Urban Confer Policy. Please also make plans to join us on **Friday, October 15, 2021**, for a virtual Urban Confer session to seek input on how to improve the Urban Confer Policy and process:

VIRTUAL URBAN CONFER SESSION IHS URBAN CONFER POLICY AND PROCESS	
DATE:	Friday, October 15, 2021
TIME:	2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., EDT
ZOOM INFORMATION:	Call-In Number: (833) 568-8864 https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1603944913 Zoom Meeting ID: 160 394 4913 Passcode: 800011

WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Please send your comments and recommendations on the draft IHS Urban Confer Policy and process by **Friday, October 29, 2021**, as follows:

- By e-mail to: urbanconfer@ihs.gov - Subject Line: **IHS Urban Confer Policy**.

I look forward to your feedback and recommendations regarding improving the IHS Urban Confer Policy and process.

If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact CDR Shannon Beyale, Health System Specialist, Office of Urban Indian Health Programs, IHS, by telephone at (301) 945-3657, or by e-mail at shannon.beyale@ihs.gov.

Thank you for your support and partnership as we work to ensure the highest possible health status for Urban Indians.

Sincerely,

/Elizabeth A. Fowler/
Acting Director