



OCT 13 2021

Dear Urban Indian Organization Leader:

On behalf of the Indian Health Service (IHS), I am writing to initiate Urban Confer to seek your input and recommendations on how to improve the process for requesting Federal assistance for medical supplies. This Urban Confer complements the Tribal Consultation initiated by the United States (U.S.) Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

On January 21, 2021, President Biden issued *Executive Order 14001 on a Sustainable Public Health Supply Chain* to direct actions to secure supplies necessary to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as future public health emergencies. The goal of Executive Order 14001 is to ensure that critical medical supplies are available in an emergency, and remain available, for use by the Federal Government, states, and Tribal and territorial public health authorities when local supplies are diminished and cannot be sourced from commercial distributors.

This Urban Confer seeks your input and recommendations to assist the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, HHS, and other appropriate executive departments and agencies to facilitate access to medical countermeasures and supplies that may be needed in a public health emergency by federally recognized Tribal governments, IHS health care providers, Tribal Health Programs (THPs), and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs).

During a public health emergency, the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) and other Federal and military stockpiles, serve as essential supply chain buffers to meet state and local medical supplies and equipment demands when commercial supplies are strained or insufficient. The COVID-19 pandemic reveals additional vulnerabilities in the global medical supply chain. Accordingly, this requires that HHS expand and enhance the capability of the SNS to respond to a nationwide, emerging, infectious disease event that requires widespread use of personal protective equipment (PPE). In response, in 2020, the IHS, in partnership with HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), developed a [streamlined process to request Federal assistance to locate scarce medical supplies, such as PPE, for facilities operated by the IHS, THPs, and UIOs](#).

The focus of this Urban Confer is to identify gaps in the process used by Urban Indian Organization providers to request medical supplies and develop recommendations on how to close such gaps to meet the ongoing needs of the current COVID-19 response, as well as any future public health emergency.

As part of this Urban Confer, I welcome your input and recommendations on the following questions:

1. What gaps or issues did you or your staff encounter at your facility when requesting Federal assistance for medical supplies needed during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What recommendations do you have to improve and address the gaps or issues?
3. What recommendations do you have to improve the request process for Federal assistance to access supplies held in the SNS and other Federal and military stockpiles?

URBAN CONFER SESSION (VIRTUAL): I invite you to join us on *Monday, October 25, 2021*, for a virtual Confer session to improve the ASPR process for UIOs requesting Federal assistance for medical supplies.

VIRTUAL URBAN CONFER SESSION: Improving Access to Federal Medical Supplies	
DATE:	Monday, October 25, 2021
TIME:	2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. EDT
ZOOM INFORMATION:	Access Zoom by Telephone: (833) 568-8864 Meeting ID: 161 856 0140 Passcode: 846535 Zoom Meeting: https://ihs.gov.zoomgov.com/j/1618560140?pwd=REZ6MnRrcVJKOFFHb1hLZkdDanRFdz09

WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: Please send your comments and recommendations on improving the process for requesting Federal assistance for medical supplies by the comment deadline of **Friday, October 29, 2021**.

- E-mail your Urban Confer comments to the following address: urbanconfer@ihs.gov.
- Please use the Subject Line: [Access to Federal Medical Supplies](#).

Thank you for your support and partnership as we work to improve the process for requesting Federal assistance for medical supplies. I look forward to our discussion.

Sincerely,

/Elizabeth A. Fowler/
Acting Director