



September 20, 2023

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am writing to share the updated Indian Health Service (IHS) Medical Priority Levels and to initiate consultation thereon before implementation. The IHS establishes medical priorities in accordance with 42 CFR § 136.23(e) to ensure that the authorization of Purchased/Referred Care (PRC) services are based on relative medical need. The Medicare National Coverage Determinations Manual from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and current medical literature are used as a basis for medical priority-level decision-making. The IHS Medical Priority Levels are updated periodically as the medical community develops new methods for treating healthcare needs.

The IHS Chief Medical Officer developed the IHS Medical Priority Levels with input from the Area Chief Medical Officers. The revised IHS Medical Priority Levels for care will replace previous medical, dental, and behavioral health priorities. The IHS Medical Priority Levels are established for Federal PRC programs. Tribal programs may choose to use the medical priorities as a guide.

Under the updated IHS Medical Priority Levels, PRC services will be divided into four general categories (each considered equal): A) Preventive and Rehabilitative Services; B) Medical, Dental, Vision, and Surgical Services; C) Reproductive & Maternal/Child Health Services; and D) Behavioral Health Services. Within each category of PRC services, there are three priority levels: Priority 1, Core – Essential Services; Priority 2, Intermediate – Necessary Services; and Priority 3, Elective – Justifiable Services.

Enclosed is the updated list with details of the IHS Medical Priority Levels. Please send your written comments and recommendations on the IHS Medical Priority Levels by Friday, October 27, 2023. You can e-mail your comments to: consultation@ihs.gov and add IHS MEDICAL PRIORITY LEVELS CONSULTATION to the subject line. The IHS will review and consider the comments received by that date.

Unless otherwise announced, the IHS-operated PRC programs will begin implementation of the updated IHS Medical Priority Levels as soon as possible after the close of the comment period and will complete implementation no later than January 1, 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact your Area PRC Officer or the Area Chief Medical Officer.

Sincerely,

Roselyn Tso
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Roselyn Tso
Director

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Roselyn Tso -S
Date: 2023.09.20
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Enclosure: Indian Health Service Medical Priorities, June 6, 2023