



December 6, 2023

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

We are pleased to announce that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Department of Health and Human Services Indian Health Service (IHS) have executed a revised agreement to facilitate reimbursement by VA to IHS for health care and related services provided by the IHS to eligible American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans.

This agreement replaces and expands upon the prior agreement between our agencies, which was originally executed on December 5, 2012. Under the new agreement, VA will now reimburse the IHS for purchased/referred care and contracted travel for AI/AN Veterans. The VA will also continue to reimburse the IHS for direct care provided to AI/AN Veterans.

The VA is authorized to enter into reimbursement agreements with IHS, Tribal Health Programs<sup>1</sup>, and Urban Indian Organizations to financially compensate them for health care and related services provided to AI/AN Veterans who are eligible for, and enrolled in, the VHA health care system, in accordance with the Indian Health Care Improvement Act at 25 U.S.C. § 1645 and the VA Sharing of Health-Care Resources at 38 U.S.C. § 8153.

Since 2012, health care programs operated by the IHS and Tribal Health Programs have received more than \$154 million from VA for care to more than 15,700 unique VHA-enrolled AI/AN Veterans, across 74 participating IHS sites, 120 Tribal Health Programs, and 5 Urban Indian Organization sites.

This agreement marks a notable partnering achievement. Our ongoing partnerships are key to promoting quality health care, increasing access to services, and coordinating resource-sharing that benefits eligible AI/AN Veterans. In parallel with today's announcement, VA is currently revising agreements that will be executed with individual Tribal Health Programs to further enhance access to care for AI/AN Veterans.

This agreement is critical to providing AI/AN Veterans with the world-class health care they deserve, and for this reason, the IHS and VA believe that it is of the utmost importance to implement this agreement immediately. We actively engaged in consultation throughout the development of this Reimbursement Agreement, and we deeply value continued feedback from the Tribal community. As the IHS and VA move forward with the implementation of the Agreement, Tribal Leaders are encouraged to send any written comments by January 23, 2024. You can e-mail your comments to: [consultation@ihs.gov](mailto:consultation@ihs.gov) and [tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov](mailto:tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov), adding REVISED IHS-VA REIMBURSEMENT

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<sup>1</sup> 25 U.S.C. 1603(25). The term "tribal health program" means an Indian tribe or tribal organization that operates any health program, service, function, activity, or facility funded, in whole or part, by the IHS through, or provided for in, a contract or compact with the IHS under the ISDEAA.

AGREEMENT to the subject line. The IHS and VA will review and consider the comments received by that date.

Sincerely,

Roselyn Tso  
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Roselyn Tso -S  
Date: 2023.12.06  
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Roselyn Tso  
Director  
Indian Health Service



Shereef Elnahal, MD, MBA  
Under Secretary for Health  
Veterans Health Administration

Enclosure: Revised Reimbursement Agreement (2023)