



MAR 24 2023

Dear Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to make you aware that the Indian Health Service (IHS) has completed Agency revisions to the IHS Urban Confer Policy (Confer Policy) as a result of your input and recommendations on this topic.

Beginning on April 27, 2021, the IHS initiated a series of virtual Confers to improve the IHS Urban Confer Policy and enhance engagement with Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs). Two subsequent Confers on the draft Confer Policy were convened on June 9, 2021, and October 15, 2021.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) requires the IHS to “confer,” to the maximum extent practicable, with Urban Indian Organizations 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 IHM.

The revised Conferring with Urban Indian Organizations at Part 5, Chapter 26 of the *Indian Health Manual* (IHM) incorporates your recommendations to provide UIOs with consistent Urban Confer practices that specify responsibilities at all levels of the IHS. The revised Confer Policy strengthens time-honored commitments to Urban Indian Organization Leaders to ensure that the IHS follows-up with UIOs on Urban Indian health priorities in a timely matter.

Our revised Confer Policy also clarifies the language that identifies a critical event for initiating an Urban Confer with the IHS and ensures UIOs have the opportunity to confer with the Agency. The revised Confer Policy provides UIOs with an annual Urban Confer report (excluding grants and contracts) that includes the results of an associated satisfaction survey to increase transparency and assess the degree to which UIOs are satisfied with Urban Confer Policy and practices. Further, the framework of the revised Confer Policy supports establishing best practices that improve engagement with UIOs and address Urban Indian health care delivery more effectively. The IHS is currently developing an implementation plan, which includes policy training for UIOs and the IHS to increase understanding and awareness about Urban Confer.

I want to thank Urban Indian Organization Leaders who participated in the Urban Confer Policy sessions and provided verbal and written comments. Your recommendations and invaluable feedback on this Confer Policy have not only helped strengthen Urban Confer practices for open and meaningful dialogue, but most importantly, your involvement and shared experience ensures that the health care needs of Urban Indian populations are addressed at the local, Area, and national levels.

If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact Rose Weahkee, Ph.D., Director, Office of Urban Indian Health Programs, IHS, by telephone at (240) 994-9361, or by e-mail at [rose.weahkee@ihs.gov](mailto:rose.weahkee@ihs.gov).

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

Sincerely,

Roselyn Tso  
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Roselyn Tso  
Director