



May 21, 2024

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am pleased to write to you, along with the Co-Chair of the Community Health Aide Program Tribal Advisory Group (CHAP TAG) Brook Bender, to invite your continued participation in the collaborative efforts between the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee (TSGAC), and the CHAP TAG to support and expand the CHAP in Indian Country.

For decades, the Alaska CHAP has set the standard for innovation and resilience by providing quality health care services delivered by community, dental, and behavioral health aides in rural and remote Tribal communities. As we face continued health inequities, staffing challenges, and barriers to health care access across the IHS system of care, it is more essential than ever for us to find and implement practical solutions to improve the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indian and Alaska Native people. Co-Chair Bender and I believe that strengthening and expanding CHAP is a critical part of finding those solutions in Alaska and the contiguous 48 states.

On December 6, 2023, President Biden signed [Executive Order 14112](#), “Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations To Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination.” This Executive Order marked a new era of Tribal self-determination in health care. The feedback and collaboration between the IHS, TSGAC, and the CHAP TAG align with the Executive Order and have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the CHAP. The collective aim is to ensure the CHAP’s expansion into the lower 48 states and its continuing development in Alaska is conducted through effective and respectful Tribal-Federal partnerships, recognizing the unique and sovereign capabilities of Tribal governments.

Over the past year, I have had multiple opportunities to engage with Tribal Leaders throughout Indian Country on these issues, while working closely to share this information with members of the CHAP TAG. The in-person tours of Tribal facilities and resulting discussions emphasized the importance of drawing on your expertise related to CHAP and CHAP expansion. Accordingly, I have directed my leadership team to develop a new approach to CHAP that is clear and proactive, respects Tribal sovereignty while meeting our Federal obligations, and ensures that CHAP will provide improved access and quality health care across Indian Country for generations to come.

In partnership with you and members of the CHAP TAG, the IHS is committed to moving forward with establishing CHAP policies that retain the unique Tribal nature of the CHAP. This commitment will result in CHAP policies that establish necessary Federal infrastructure,

including Tribal Consultation requirements related to IHS Programs, Services, Functions, and Activities (PSFAs) or inherently Federal functions. It also ensures that organizational and delivery-specific experience developed by Tribal communities most familiar with the CHAP contribute to the implementation.


Our goal going forward is to ensure that as the CHAP grows, we can incorporate and expand on the essential community-based advantages of CHAP delivery, so that these newly created programs can be replicated in each IHS Area, and throughout Indian Country. At the heart of CHAP expansion is the importance of a truly Tribal/Federal partnership. This partnership supports the implementation of CHAP by Tribes, with a Federal role in facilitating resources, support, and advocacy, to remove barriers to implementation.

With the support of the CHAP TAG, I have asked Dr. Loretta Christensen, Chief Medical Officer, IHS, to coordinate CHAP expansion activities. In the coming weeks and months, we anticipate seeking further input from Tribal Leaders and Tribal community members.

For additional CHAP-specific information and opportunities to engage with CHAP TAG delegates in your local IHS Area, please visit the CHAP Website at <https://www.ihs.gov/chap/>. If you need additional information, please contact Dr. Christensen, Chief Medical Officer, IHS, online at ihschap@ihs.gov.

Sincerely,


Roselyn Tso
-S



Digitally signed by
Roselyn Tso -S
Date: 2024.05.21
09:15:19 -04'00'

Roselyn Tso
Director

Brook
Bender



Digitally signed by Brook
Bender
Date: 2024.05.21
10:38:22 -07'00'

Brook Bender
CHAP TAG Co-Chair