



HRSA

Health Resources & Services Administration

November 17, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IHS Public Affairs: (301) 443-3593, newsroom@ihs.gov

HRSA Newsroom: press@hrsa.gov

Recognizing National Rural Health Day

Observance spotlights the challenges and opportunities in providing health care in rural America

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and Indian Health Service (IHS) join communities across America today to recognize National Rural Health Day. This annual observance brings attention to best practices and resources available to rural health care facilities, including those that serve American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN).

"HRSA is committed to improving access to quality health care for rural, tribal and other hard-to-reach populations," said Jim Macrae, HRSA Acting Administrator. "With 47 percent of HRSA-funded health centers located in or serving rural communities, where many AI/AN reside, HRSA has a strong investment in improving health care for this population."

"Every day, dedicated IHS health professionals and administrative staff support quality health care at facilities across the country," said Ms. Mary L. Smith, IHS Principal Deputy Director. "IHS staff are on the front lines of medical care in some of the most remote areas of our country, and are overcoming challenges and striving to provide the best care to our patients. National Rural Health Day is an opportunity to recognize and thank the doctors, nurses and other staff who are providing quality care for their inspiring commitment to improving the health of American Indian and Alaska Native communities."

With the approximately 62 million Americans living in rural and frontier areas in mind, HRSA and IHS are spotlighting a number of activities today:

- Webcast about telehealth bringing specialty medical care to rural areas: Thursday, November 17, 2:30 pm ET. Dr. Mary Wakefield, Acting Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will provide remarks for the webcast, which offers a live demonstration of the technology. View the broadcast at: [Rural Telehealth Demonstration](#).

- Webcast hosted by National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health: Thursday, November 17, 11:00 am ET. HRSA Acting Administrator Jim Macrae will provide a brief introduction and FORHP Associate Administrator Tom Morris will talk about HRSA's investments in rural health. Cara James, Director of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Office of Minority Health, will talk about CMS' new Rural Health Council. View the broadcast at:
[Federal Efforts Related to Rural Health: Piecing Together Our Collaborative Work.](#)
- IHS partners with the American College of Emergency Physicians and the HHS Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology to bring best practices to rural Emergency Departments. IHS is holding a session today to be broadcast nationally to IHS facilities from Omaha Winnebago IHS Hospital in Nebraska that covers telemedicine, quality care, performance tracking tools, leadership, accountability, teamwork and work-life balance. Ms. Mary Smith, IHS Principal Deputy Director, Dr. Jay Kaplan, American College of Emergency Physicians President, and Dr. Vindell Washington, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, will provide remarks.

Other activities over the past year have also focused on rural and tribal efforts:

- In August 2016, HRSA awarded more than \$16 million to community health organizations to improve access to quality health care in rural communities. Funds will expand the use of telehealth technology, assist providers with quality improvement activities, and support policy-oriented research to better understand the challenges faced by rural communities. Administered by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) within HRSA, the awards will support 60 rural communities in 32 states, along with seven Rural Health Research Centers.
- IHS announced a [\\$6.8 million contract to Avera Health to expand telehealth](#) in the Great Plains Area to bring tele-video healthcare services to IHS facilities in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska, including additional emergency medical and specialty services. Throughout this year, IHS has been collaborating with tribal leaders and local health partners on a series of actions to aggressively confront long-standing health care service challenges in rural areas, pursuing solutions that will bring sustainable improvements in quality of care.
- FOHRP's Office for the Advancement of Telehealth at HRSA provides nearly \$15 million in grant funding for telehealth projects that improve health outcomes for rural, tribal and other underserved populations, and provide technical assistance to communities wishing to establish or enhance and expand telehealth services. FORHP also supports state professional licensing boards to encourage collaboration to reduce statutory and regulatory barriers to telemedicine.

- The [IHS Fort Belknap Service Unit](#) in rural northern Montana has been awarded The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval for Hospital Accreditation: This symbol of quality reflects the IHS commitment to providing safe and effective patient care. Like other health care facilities in the public and private sectors, IHS Fort Belknap works collaboratively with experts to assess quality performance and proactively resolve any issues to ensure safe patient care.

National Rural Health Day was started by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health. [Read more about this observance.](#)

The Health Resources and Services Administration is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HRSA is the primary Federal agency responsible for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated, or medically vulnerable. For more information about HRSA and its programs, visit www.hrsa.gov.

IHS, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. For more information, visit <http://www.ihs.gov>. Follow [IHS on Facebook](#).

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