



## Indian Health Service Statement

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Contact: (301) 443-3593, [newsroom@ihs.gov](mailto:newsroom@ihs.gov)

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### **Statement from Rear Adm. Michael Weahkee on the release of the Presidential Task Force on Protecting Native American Children in the Indian Health Service System report**

The Indian Health Service remains [committed to ensuring a culture of quality, leadership and accountability](#). We appreciate the feedback provided by the Presidential Task Force on Protecting Native American Children in the Indian Health Service System.

The Task Force report complements ongoing work by the HHS Office of Inspector General, examining the sufficiency and implementation of IHS patient protection policies and procedures. The IHS has fully cooperated with the Task Force as well as the HHS Office of Inspector General to provide interviews and all information requested by them in the course of their work.

Together the reports will be used to continue to make improvements to ensure [protection of our patients](#) and prevent their harm to the best of our ability. Sexual assault and abuse will not be tolerated in the Indian Health Service.

Several of the recommendations in the Task Force's report would require Congressional action. The IHS has already made legislative proposals in the agency's [Fiscal Year 2021 Congressional Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees](#) that would address several recommendations if passed by Congress and signed by the president.

External oversight provides the Indian Health system with another opportunity to demonstrate integrity and accountability. Our expectations of our workforce are clear and we welcome any opportunity to continue to improve and sustain the culture of care throughout the agency.

The Indian Health Service has taken aggressive action to ensure patient protection, however we recognize there is always room for improvement and we will continue to make this one of our highest priorities. For example, in July 2019, IHS [announced new mandatory training for all employees](#) regarding protecting children from sexual abuse in health care settings. IHS has also implemented a [centralized credentialing system](#), allowing credentialing staff to access provider credentialing information in a single electronic database for all federal IHS facilities, and for the first time, hiring an IHS credentialing program manager at headquarters.

IHS has also launched a new website at <http://www.IHS.gov/sexualabuseprevention> to provide information to patients, employees, and our tribal and urban Indian organization partners on IHS efforts and actions individuals can take to prevent sexual abuse in the Indian health system.

IHS will continue to work in partnership with tribes and urban Indian organizations across the nation to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

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