



Indian Health Service Press Release

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IHS Announces New Albuquerque Area Director

The Indian Health Service (IHS) announced the appointment of Leonard D. Thomas, M.D., as the permanent area director for the Albuquerque Area of the Indian Health Service. Dr. Thomas, a member of the Navajo Nation, who has been acting Albuquerque Area director since March 2015, will continue to oversee and provide leadership to ten service units in New Mexico, Colorado and Texas. The Albuquerque Area IHS delivers services to more than 86,000 Native American patients through a system of four hospitals, 12 health centers, six health stations, two urban Indian programs, one dental center and one regional residential treatment center.

“Dr. Thomas is not only a respected physician, but has proven himself to be an effective manager and leader as well,” said IHS Principal Deputy Director Mary L. Smith. “I want to thank Dr. Thomas for all of his hard work as acting area director and congratulate him on his selection as the permanent Albuquerque area director. The IHS Albuquerque Area service units will continue to be served well under Dr. Thomas’ leadership, and the Albuquerque Area will continue to provide access to quality health care.”

Dr. Thomas began his IHS career in 1999 as a family practice medical officer at the Crow/Northern Cheyenne Service Unit in Crow Agency, Montana. Dr. Thomas has held the position of chief medical officer for the Albuquerque Area IHS since July 2005, and previously served as the acting area director from June 2009 to May 2010 and from March 2015 until this appointment.

“It is my privilege to continue working with the Native American tribes in the Albuquerque Area as the area director to provide the highest quality healthcare services to the Native American patients we serve,” Thomas said. “I am excited about the opportunity to continue working with our healthcare partners and will maintain focus on improving the quality of care and increasing access to patient care so the health status of our Native American communities continues to improve.”

Dr. Thomas holds a Bachelor of Science degree in cellular & molecular biology and chemistry from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, and a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of New Mexico School Of Medicine. He completed his family practice residency at the Saint Joseph’s Regional Medical Center in South Bend, Indiana, in June of 1999. He is a board-certified family practice physician and is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians and the Association of American Indian Physicians.

“Dr. Thomas has shown his incredible dedication to the Indian Health Service and the patients we serve,” said Rear Adm. Kevin Meeks, IHS acting deputy director of field operations. “As area director, he will be responsible for planning, developing and directing programs to ensure quality health care and support the IHS mission of raising the physical, mental, social and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.”

The Indian Health Service Albuquerque Area is responsible for the provision of health services to 27 distinctly different tribal groups. The Area serves 20 Pueblos, two Apache bands, three Navajo Chapters and two Ute tribes across four Southwest states. Additionally, numerous tribal members from throughout the United States who live, work or go to school in the urban centers of the Albuquerque Area are provided services in health facilities operated by the Indian Health Service. For more information about IHS’s Albuquerque Area, visit <https://www.ihs.gov/albuquerque/>.

The 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 www.ihs.gov. Follow IHS on [Facebook](#).

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