



Indian Health Service Press Release

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IHS and Cherokee Nation launch new HIV pilot project

On National HIV Testing Day, the Indian Health Service and [Cherokee Nation Health Service](#) are announcing the launch of a new HIV pilot project to ensure the future success of the [Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America](#).

The pilot project will provide an opportunity to begin implementing and evaluating some key foundational activities that will help accelerate progress toward ending the HIV epidemic in Indian Country.

“These foundational efforts will set the IHS and our tribal partners on a path for rapid progress in reducing new HIV infections,” Principal Deputy Director Rear Adm. Michael D. Weahkee said. “The pilot project will also reveal important insight into the HIV prevention and treatment activities that should be implemented early — and those that should be strengthened over time.”

Findings will be shared with other communities to accelerate and support their efforts to implement the most effective prevention strategies locally — and to move the initiative forward should the Ending the HIV Epidemic resources be funded in 2020.

“We have proven to be a successful partner in developing cutting-edge pilot programs which can drastically decrease health disparities, not just for Cherokees but for all of Indian Country,” said Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker. “Improved health care over multiple generations is our top priority, and if we can collaborate with our federal partners at IHS to raise awareness, increase education and actively work to prevent new cases of HIV, then we will be creating a healthier future for northeast Oklahoma.”

The Ending the HIV Epidemic plan focuses efforts on 48 counties and seven southern states with a high proportion of HIV diagnosis in rural areas. The Cherokee Nation is located in Oklahoma, the state with the highest American Indian population among those seven southern states.

This pilot is part of efforts by the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health to jumpstart key activities in select communities using Fiscal Year 2019 resources from the Minority HIV/AIDS Fund.

The Cherokee Nation was chosen for this pilot project because of their proven track record in Hepatitis C prevention and treatment, which screened 50 percent of health services patients. Among the 3.2 percent testing positive, the cure rate is over 90 percent. The Ending the HIV Epidemic plan will use a similar model. Current statistics show that 35 percent of Cherokee Nation patients utilizing the tribe's health centers have been screened for HIV, with less than one percent testing positive. Ninety percent of those patients diagnosed with HIV are receiving care, and 90 percent of those are virally suppressed. The pilot project will help increase the number of patients screened.

Along with the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, IHS is a key partner in this HHS effort. The CDC is also working to launch additional pilot projects in select communities.

National HIV Testing Day is observed annually on June 27 to encourage people to get tested for HIV, know their status, and get into treatment right away if they have HIV. This year's theme, "[Doing It My Way](#)," highlights how and why people make testing part of their lives in a way that is comfortable for them.

The IHS, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. Our mission is to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Cherokee Nation is the federally recognized government of the Cherokee people and has inherent sovereign status recognized by treaty and law. The seat of tribal government is the W.W. Keeler Complex near Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capital of the Cherokee Nation. With more than 370,000 citizens, 11,000 employees and a variety of tribal enterprises ranging from aerospace and defense contracts to entertainment venues, Cherokee Nation is one of the largest employers in northeastern Oklahoma and the largest tribal nation in the United States. To learn more, please visit www.cherokee.org. Find all the latest Cherokee Nation news at www.anadisgoi.com.

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