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Indian Health Service Partners with Two Leading Universities on a Behavioral Health Residency Program

Memoranda of Understanding include recruitment, retention and research.

The Indian Health Service today entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Michigan in an effort to advance the recruitment, retention and development of behavioral health clinicians in Indian Country. Through the MOU, the Indian Health Service and the two universities will collaborate in bringing American Indian and Alaska Native social work students and highly qualified graduates to IHS health facilities for internships and clinical residencies as well as supporting the areas of education, research and evaluation.

“IHS is taking a variety of approaches to address behavioral health issues in tribal communities, and this includes engaging with some of our nation’s top universities and colleges to increase the pipeline of behavioral health providers in American Indian and Alaska Native communities,” said IHS Principal Deputy Director [Mary L. Smith](#). “Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Michigan are educating the next generation of social work and behavioral healthcare providers that will serve Indian Country, and partnering with these leading educational institutions strengthens our capacity to deliver quality behavioral health care and ensure positive health outcomes for IHS patients.”

With recruitment and retention in the behavioral health field as a priority, both entities will partner on providing American Indian and Alaska Native students with educational opportunities, identifying and leveraging financial assistance and support, and developing a clinical supervision model that ensures graduates achieve proper licensure status.

“The Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies is excited to develop this new partnership with Indian Health Service. One of our goals is to support Buder Scholars as they seek practical and careers in mental and behavioral health agencies across Indian Country and through this partnership we are furthering our capacity to achieve this,” said [Molly Tovar](#), director of the Buder Center at the Washington University in St. Louis.

“This is a great opportunity for both universities and the Indian Health Service,” said Lynn Videka, dean of the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

In addition, IHS will provide clinical residency and internship opportunities to Washington University in St. Louis and University of Michigan School of Social Work students who are working to obtain degrees in behavioral health degrees, such as Master in Social Work, Master in Counseling or a Doctorate in Social Work or Psychology. This effort ensures that more students are trained with the skills to provide behavioral health services.

This MOU also builds on existing [IHS recruitment efforts](#) into the behavioral health field, which includes a [funding opportunity](#) that allows tribal programs to hire paraprofessionals, such as behavioral health aides, with their funding awards for behavioral health services.

Other steps the Indian Health Service has taken to increase access to behavioral health services include recently [awarding a contract to provide telehealth services](#) to all hospitals in the [Great Plains Area](#), initiating tribal consultation on a draft policy to [expand the Community Health Aide Program](#) and implementing a policy for providers who prescribe opioids to check the state [Prescription Drug Monitoring Program](#).

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About the Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at the Washington University in St. Louis:

The Kathryn M. Buder Center for American Indian Studies, located within the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, promotes the preparation of professionals to assume leadership positions in social service agencies and governmental institutions dedicated to improving the lives of American Indians. We prepare future American Indian leaders to practice in tribal and urban settings, making significant contributions to the health, wellness and the sustained future of Indian Country. For more information, visit the [Buder Center website](#).

About the University of Michigan School of Social Work:

The University of Michigan School of Social Work has a MSW and a joint Social Work and Social Science PhD program. We have led the profession in teaching, research, innovation, collaboration and service for over 90 years and are ranked # 1 in the nation by U.S. News and World Report. We educate the next generation of diverse social workers, and our faculty and students are empowered to reach out, raise hope, and change society. For more information, visit <http://ssw.umich.edu/programs/msw>.

About the Indian Health Service:

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 <http://www.ihs.gov>. Follow IHS on [Facebook](#).