



Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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IHS Releases COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan November 2020

Today, the Indian Health Service is announcing the IHS COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan November 2020. The plan details how the IHS health care system will prepare for and operationalize a vaccine when it becomes available. It also provides important guidance for all IHS federal, tribal health programs, and urban Indian organizations that choose to receive COVID-19 vaccine coordinated through IHS.

"IHS COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan is laying the necessary groundwork for the distribution of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine," said IHS Director Rear Adm. Michael D. Weahkee. "We'll ensure that safe and effective vaccines can reach Indian Country as quickly and equitably as possible."

To better understand the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native communities prior to publication of the IHS COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Plan, in September, the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#) initiated tribal consultation to seek input from tribal leaders on COVID-19 vaccination planning for Indian Country. The IHS also initiated [tribal consultation](#) and [urban confer](#) in October to seek input from tribal and urban leaders on the IHS COVID-19 Pandemic Vaccine Draft Plan.

"Working with our tribal and urban partners, we are making certain we are ready to begin safe and effective vaccinations for Indian Country as soon as an FDA-approved or authorized vaccine is available," said Rear Adm. Francis Frazier, lead for the IHS Vaccine Task Force.

The IHS developed the COVID-19 Vaccine plan based on The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [COVID-19 Vaccination Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations](#), while recognizing the sovereign authority of tribal nations to provide for the welfare of their people. The IHS reached out to tribes and urban Indian organizations for their involvement in planning efforts. Each tribe and urban Indian organization provided its preference for COVID-19 vaccine distribution (IHS or state distribution) to ensure the vaccine is effectively delivered to Indian Country.

This plan is based on currently available information. IHS will continue to assess, respond, and adapt federal guidance as new information becomes available regarding vaccine developments, vaccine storage requirements, risk groups, and prioritization recommendations by researchers and advisory bodies.

In May 2020, the White House announced [Operation Warp Speed](#), a public-private partnership to facilitate the development, manufacturing, and distribution of COVID-19 countermeasures. It has been laying the groundwork to produce and deliver 300 million doses of safe and effective vaccines with the initial doses available by January 2021.

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 who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#) , [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#) .

To learn more about Indian Health Service support for the nationwide COVID-19 response, visit ihs.gov/coronavirus.gov.

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