



## Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

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# Indian Health Service Announces New Office of Quality

Today, the Indian Health Service is announcing its new Office of Quality to strengthen the agency's ongoing efforts to ensure the delivery of quality health care at federally operated facilities serving American Indian and Alaska Native people.

The IHS Office of Quality will provide leadership and promote consistency in health care quality across the agency by consolidating and enhancing oversight of these efforts at IHS headquarters.

"The Indian Health Service places a high priority on ensuring the delivery of quality health care to our patients," said Rear Adm. Michael D. Weahkee, IHS principal deputy director. "The IHS Office of Quality will bring together key functions and responsibilities to maximize our quality improvement efforts and integrate quality in a collaborative and organized manner across the entire IHS."

The plan to create the new office was developed in consultation with the tribes served by IHS in response to challenges in delivering quality health care in Indian Country. The Office of Quality will be led by IHS [Deputy Director for Quality Health Care Jonathan Merrell, RN, BSN, MBA](#).

Other recent quality improvement efforts by IHS include:

- [Implementing a centralized credentialing software system](#)
- [Creating a National Accountability Dashboard for Quality](#)
- [Establishing patient wait time standards](#)
- [Developing a Patient Experience of Care Survey](#)
- [Developing the Partnership to Advance Tribal Health, in collaboration with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#)

The reorganization plan is included in a Federal Register notice made public today. The reorganization will be effective on January 26, 2019.

Additionally, the reorganization plan will elevate the key role of liaison to the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). This role will be performed by a dedicated full-time position in the Office of the Director to ensure appropriate attention and focus and underscore the importance of timely responsiveness to address corrective actions recommended by external authorities.

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. 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](#).

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