



Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IHS seeks proposals to expand telehealth services in Great Plains

Enhanced services will provide quality care to patient population of up to 130,000

The Indian Health Service today issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) to provide telehealth services at its seven hospitals and many health centers and other facilities throughout Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota. IHS is seeking to expand telehealth services as a means of strengthening access to care at its facilities in all 19 [Great Plains Area](#) service units, which serve 130,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives.

This RFP supports IHS patients and providers in accessing many areas of health care, including emergency medical services at the seven hospitals in the Great Plains as well as appointments with specialists in behavioral health; cardiology; maternal and child health; nephrology; pain management; pediatric behavioral health; rheumatology; wound care; ear, nose and throat care; and dermatology.

“Building on IHS strengths in information technology and electronic health records, this new effort in IHS telehealth expands access to care, particularly specialty care that may be difficult to find in rural areas,” said Mary Smith, IHS principal deputy director. “IHS is committed to providing quality health care to our patients, who are our first priority, and integrating telemedicine with community-based services is an important part of the way IHS delivers on that commitment. This telemedicine initiative is an important step in expanding access to care for our patients, who will receive specialized care nearer to home instead of travelling long distances to see a specialist,” Smith said.

The Request for Proposal is available at:

https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=5115931f47d934a776984e14472c318b&tab=core&_cvview=0

Telehealth services use electronic communications to facilitate the provision of health care, with clinical appointments provided remotely, as well as some nonclinical services such as provider training. In some cases, specialty care furnished through telehealth is supplemented by a nurse or assistant who is physically in the room with the patient. IHS has found that telehealth can be one of the best ways to get health care services where they are needed most.

“This telemedicine initiative reflects the IHS commitment to expanding access to quality care for its patients and supporting the work of the South Dakota Health Care Solutions Coalition,” said Smith.

IHS participates actively in the South Dakota Health Care Solutions Coalition, which recommended increased use of telehealth services to support emergency departments and support increased access to primary and specialty care consultation and treatment in IHS and Tribal Programs. The South Dakota Health Care Solutions Coalition is a partnership between South Dakota Tribes, IHS, Medicaid service providers, South Dakota Legislators and State agencies to develop a strategy to improve healthcare access and outcomes for American Indians.

IHS has a long history of using telehealth to meet the needs of patients:

- The IHS TeleBehavioral Health Center of Excellence was established in 2009 to provide behavioral health services for patients across the Indian health system. The Center works to provide, promote and support the delivery of high quality, culturally competent telebehavioral health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives: <https://www.ihs.gov/telebehavioral>.
- The IHS-Joslin Vision Network Teleophthalmology Program was established in 2001 to screen IHS patients across the country for diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in patients with diabetes. Read more: <https://www.ihs.gov/teleophthalmology>.

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.

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