



Indian Health Service Statement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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IHS Principal Deputy Director Michael Weahkee Statement on Announcement of White House Child Protection Task Force

The Indian Health Service is committed to ensuring a culture of quality, leadership and accountability. Protecting our patients is a key element of our commitment to delivering quality care. The Presidential Task Force on Protecting Native American Children in the Indian Health Service System will complement the actions already taken and planned by IHS to protect our patients and communities.

I sincerely regret that children were victimized by those entrusted to care for them. I have made ensuring patient protection one of my highest priorities and IHS has taken aggressive action over the last year.

Sexual assault and abuse will not be tolerated in the Indian Health Service. New professional standards and stronger requirements for IHS employees to report suspected sexual abuse and exploitation of children have been put into place. In addition, we have established guidelines for identifying and responding to suspected child maltreatment, and updated guidance on appropriately incorporating trauma informed care in service delivery to better address violence and victimization.

External oversight provides the Indian Health system with another opportunity to demonstrate integrity and accountability. Our expectations of our workforce are clear and we welcome any opportunity to continue to improve and sustain the culture of care throughout the agency. IHS will continue to work in partnership with tribes and urban Indian organizations across the nation to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

Visit [HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov) to read a statement from Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan on the Announcement of the White House Child Protection Task Force.

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