



2024 Agency Work Plan Third Quarter Summary Report

The Indian Health Service's mission is *"to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level."*

Background: In January 2024, Indian Health Service leadership implemented the [2024 Agency Work Plan](#), which includes 15 priorities and outlines critical actions the agency has taken and will take over the current year to address risk priorities. In addition, 10 of last year's 2023 Work Plan priorities were transitioned to operational action items that the Agency will continue to monitor throughout this calendar year. A workgroup has led each activity to identify root causes and work toward sustainable improvement to demonstrate a measurable impact on the agency. The goal is to complete the actions in the Work Plan by December 31, 2024. The IHS remains committed to mitigating programmatic and operational risks before they arise. IHS leadership is focused on increased and effective communication with tribal and urban Indian organization partners on this work while developing sustainable actions.

Status: Communications about the Work Plan include progress, barriers encountered, resources needed, next steps, specific timelines, and accomplishments. IHS leadership tracks progress for each activity and looks for sustained progress over time. IHS leadership is committed to providing improved transparency and clarity on information and initiatives that are being undertaken by the IHS, as well as in coordination with our partnering agencies. Results of the work are made public for our partners and stakeholders' awareness. IHS is providing quarterly updates on the progress of the Work Plan through the [IHS Work Plan Status Report](#).

Third Quarter Work Plan and Operational Priority Accomplishments:

- **Facility Manager and Safety Officer Training Agency-Wide** – The goal of providing 22 training opportunities for competency development targeting facility manager and safety officer positions was exceeded and 25 opportunities have been provided to date. The IHS Environmental Health Support Center's consultants provided support to the Environment of Care and Life Safety and Enterprise Risk Management workgroups to ensure accreditation at clinical facilities agency-wide.
- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL): Sanitation Facilities Program Project and Recruitment Videos** – The IHS worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to complete production on two new videos showcasing sanitation facilities construction projects benefiting the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota. The videos illustrate the significant positive outcomes that can result when federal agencies, like the IHS and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and tribes work in true nation-to-nation

partnership to direct resources where tribal communities need them. Videos can be found on the IHS YouTube channel [here](#) and [here](#).

- **Employee Wellbeing and Resiliency** – A new charter was established for a National Committee within the Combined Councils for Worker Wellbeing. This committee will measure progress through key metrics aimed at improving the well-being and resilience of IHS employees, with a goal of enhancing personal health, satisfaction, and productivity agency-wide. The implementation of the [Benson-Henry Institute Stress Management and Resiliency Training](#) program launched two cohorts this calendar year. This initiative directly addresses the organizational need for resilience-building by incorporating scientifically backed mind-body principles.
- **Evaluate and Improve Internal Communications** – The IHS held four leadership trainings for managers and supervisors focused on improving respectful internal communications. These trainings are essential to increasing positive employee engagement, improving the overall experiences of IHS teams, and honoring the role each employee plays in creating a positive agency culture. The IHS continued to increase communication on a weekly basis on the agency’s progress toward the [IHS 2024 Work Plan](#) priorities. As a result of improving internal communications, the 2024 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results show an increase of two percentage points over the 2023 results for “managers communicate the goals of the organization.”
- **Improve Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) Operations** – In July 2024, the IHS ISDEAA negotiators met in Billings, Montana, to focus on issues that have a nationwide impact, with an emphasis on Contract Support Costs and implementing the recent decision by the United States Supreme Court. Over the past eight months, an average of four hours of training was offered on various ISDEAA-related topics each month. The training series featured 47 different in-house subject matter experts that delivered 23 unique training sessions, including 18 one-hour bite-sized learning sessions, 10 two-hour Town Hall sessions, and one full-day in-person ISDEAA training tailored for federal chief executive officers. Approximately 102 participants attended each session.
- **Purchased/Referred Care (PRC) Authorization and Payment Process** – The PRC vacancy rate is down from its highest mark of 36% to 33% across IHS. Active assessment and working of pending claims has resulted in a 37% decrease since December 2023. Revised referral language was developed for inclusion in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act’s No Patient Liability Language to trigger patient protections upon each authorized patient referral. Similar language was added to the fiscal intermediary/vendor correspondence. IHS is engaging the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to collaborate on further patient protection related to medical debt. The IHS director held three community town halls to hear patient input on the PRC program. In depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with core users and subject matter experts. The insight gained will be used to develop an action plan to improve the payment process.

- **PRC Carryover** – Target for 100% completion of spend plans has been accomplished and now guides decision-making. IHS has demonstrated an overall 31% decrease in total unobligated balances (prior and current year funds combined) in fiscal year 2024, which more than doubled the decrease of 14% in FY 2023. This marks the lowest unobligated balance since FY 2018 and demonstrates the need to maximize referred care. For example, since 2016, the number of IHS sites covering all medical priorities has increased from 29% to 87% in August 2024. Furthermore, 98% of federal facilities are covering some, if not all, medical priority 3 (elective) referrals.
- **National Patient Safety Policy** – The agency patient safety policy provides minimum standards for all local safety programs and explicit mechanisms for oversight. All IHS facilities have completed a patient safety policy audit with 88% compliance. All IHS facilities that were not 100% compliant have a corrective action plan in place with governing board oversight, and are expected to be 100% compliant with Indian Health Manual [Part 3, Chapter 42, Patient Safety](#).
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Strategic Plan** – On August 8, 2024, the IHM [Part 5, Chapter 38, Language Access Plan](#) was issued to provide access to beneficiaries and other eligible individuals with limited English proficiency when obtaining or accessing IHS services. Expanded recruitment efforts focused on minority-serving organizations to attract students and professionals to IHS careers. IHS established a partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Readiness & Employment Coordinators to connect with veterans seeking employment. A recruitment toolkit was developed to assist with resources. On August 30, 2024, the IHS director presented the first IHS DEIA Award to those that demonstrated a commitment to cultivating a respectful and inclusive work environment. On September 24, 2024, IHS hosted the third virtual IHS Recruitment Information Session. On September 26, 2024, IHS held the first DEIA Council meeting to advise the IHS director on fostering DEIA principles into the workplace.
- **Implement Workforce Development Plan** – Five IHS employees participated in the Federal Executive Institute Leadership for a Democratic Society, which is an elite program to prepare leaders for senior executive positions. On September 5, 2024, the IHS Executive Development Program held the inaugural Cohort 1 commencement ceremony for 30 participants in Rockville, Maryland. An IHS Leader Development Framework has been developed to serve as an agency-wide roadmap for management and oversight of succession planning to ensure training curricula addresses the required skills and competencies for effective leadership.
- **PRC Delivery Area Expansion** – A Federal Register Notice was published on August 14, 2024, to expand the geographic boundaries of the PRC Delivery Area for the [Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon](#).

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