

ISSUE

The future of Indian health care requires coordinated intervention of health care services, educational systems, and economic development programs. Critical to this effort are collaborations and partnerships among tribal nations, urban Indian health organizations, academic medical centers, foundations, businesses, professional organizations, and federal agencies and programs.

BACKGROUND

The Indian Health Service (IHS) cannot improve the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people without mutually beneficial partnerships. The belief that improvements in health services alone will mean improvements in overall health status is not reasonable. Improvements must take place in all areas that contribute to quality of life, including educational achievement, employment opportunities, and economic development. Just as the underlying premise that responsibility for health care for AI/ANs must include all Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies and programs, there is also recognition that other federal agencies have a shared responsibility for improving programs that impact on all quality of life issues.

The IHS works in partnership with members of the local communities it serves. This includes consulting with those who are most knowledgeable of the daily challenges of Indian health care, as well as with tribal governments and organizations, to establish a collaborative decision-making process. The solidifying and strengthening of these partnerships is one of IHS's greatest management achievements over the years. These achievements in the health arena can be expanded through similar efforts in the academic and business arenas.

STATUS

IHS Collaborations have been established with all HHS agencies, as well as with other government agencies, including the Departments of Interior, Justice, Veterans Affairs, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Collaborations with non-governmental organizations include the Notah Begay III Foundation, National Congress of American Indians, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Mayo Clinic, Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins University, NIKE USA, Inc., University of Buffalo, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology, as well as many other universities and health, medical, and local organizations across the country. All these partnerships have been established to complement health programs and to examine how improvements in education, law enforcement, business practices, and employment can have positive effects on health status. IHS also shares public health strategic approaches and best practices with other countries and their respective indigenous populations, including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand.

OPTIONS/PLANS

The continued success of collaborations is dependent upon the embracing of the principle that responsibility for the provision of health care for Indian people is a shared responsibility within all of HHS, with IHS serving as the lead agency for advocating and assisting other HHS agencies in this activity.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For referral to the appropriate spokesperson, contact the IHS Public Affairs Staff at 301-443-3593.



In December 2014, Acting IHS Director Dr. Yvette Roubideaux and General Manager of Nike N7 Sam McCracken sign a Memorandum of Agreement to promote healthy lifestyle choices.