



Indian Health Service Press Release

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IHS Chief of Staff Clayton Fulton Assumes Delegable Duties of Agency Director

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Mr. Clayton Fulton has announced that HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has delegated to him, in his capacity as Indian Health Service chief of staff, all delegable authorities, duties, and functions of the IHS director. This delegation will remain in place while the IHS director position continues to be vacant.

As part of this transition, Mr. Benjamin Smith will return to his position as deputy director, and Mr. Darrell LaRoche will resume his role as deputy director for management operations. Dr. Rose Weahkee also concludes her service in her acting leadership role. Each of these leaders has provided steady guidance and commitment during a period of significant responsibility. Mr. Fulton expressed his sincere appreciation for their service on behalf of the agency and the tribal nations served by the agency.

In making the announcement, Fulton provided assurances that while this leadership transition continues, the mission of the Indian Health Service remains constant and strong. He stated, "We remain fully committed to upholding the government-to-government relationship and ensuring continuity of services and operations across the Indian health system. The work of raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level continues to guide every decision we make."

Fulton, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation who earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Michigan Law School and MBA from Northeastern State University, continued, "You have my commitment that IHS will maintain transparency, partnership, and open communication throughout this period. I look forward to continuing our work together to advance tribal health priorities and to support the delivery of high-quality, culturally grounded care across all our service areas."

The Indian Health Service, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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