

**Billings Area IHS  
Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee  
FY2022 2nd Quarter Report  
October- December 2021**

<p><b>Area Tribal Representatives:</b> Matthew Matusiak, Chief Executive Officer Blackfeet Nation Health Services, Blackfeet Nation Browning, MT</p>	<p><b>Federal Liaison:</b> Michelle Begay, Office of Tribal Programs, Billings Area Indian Health Service Billings, MT</p>
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**Goal 1: To ensure that comprehensive, culturally appropriate personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people**

**Little Shell Health Center** Ribbon Cutting Ceremony was held on November 12, 2021. Billings Area Director Bryce Redgrave and Rear Adm. Chris Buchanan, IHS Deputy Director for Field Operations, attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Little Shell Health Center in Great Falls, Montana. Rear Adm. Buchanan congratulated Little Shell Tribal Chairman Gerald Gray, the Tribal Council, and the many others that have worked hard to make the health center a reality. The new facility will provide much-needed, high quality primary care services that will help improve the health and well-being of the community for years to come. Billings Area Director Bryce Redgrave acknowledged the significant milestone would not have been achieved without the Tribes advocacy and IHS Headquarters/Area staff making this a priority during a major pandemic.

**Billings Area Office** – Billings Area Director Bryce Redgrave and Rear Adm. Chris Buchanan, IHS Deputy Director for Field Operations, visited the Indian Family Health Clinic in Great Falls, Montana in November 2021. Mr. Wesley Old Coyote, Chief Executive Officer, and staff provided an overview of the Urban Indian Organization’s program mission, vision and services available to the community.

**Billings Area Office** - Billings Area held their virtual fiscal year (FY) 2024 Budget Formulation Work Session on November 16-18, 2021. Over 40 Tribal Leaders and their staff participated in the successful meeting to establish budget priorities and hot issues for the upcoming budget cycle. The Area’s Tribal Consultation recommended reallocations within the \$51 billion guidance level. Tribal Leaders recommended Alcohol and Substance Abuse and Mental Health as the top two (2) priorities. The hot topics associated with these priorities were the establishment of a Youth Regional Treatment Center (YRTC) in the Billings Area; lack of alcohol and drug treatment services for the youth is a factor and the need for services increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Billings Area Tribes request funding for an YRTC to address ongoing issues of substance abuse and co-occurring disorders among our youth.

**Fort Belknap Service Unit** hired two (2) dentists, bringing the total of dental officers up to four (4) dentists for the Service Unit. Staff have been able to address the backlog of patient care issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and many years of delayed care. The Service Unit is providing level five (5) procedures (root canals, crowns, bridges and dentures) on-site reducing the need for Purchased Referred Care (PRC) referrals. This has resulted in better quality of care for patients and reduced delay in care while waiting for referrals and issues with transportation to specialists. The Service Unit also hired three (3) Emergency Room (ER) Physicians and one (1) ER Physician Assistant. This is the first time that the ER has been over 80% filled with fulltime providers.

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**Goal 2: To promote excellence and quality through innovation of the Indian health system into an optimally performing organization**

**Billings Area Office of Quality** has started monthly Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Lunch and Learn Sessions for all staff to learn more about quality improvement and patient safety. There will be 11 total sessions that began in October 2021 and will cover all of the modules for participants to complete the Basic Certificate in Safety and Quality from IHI.

**Billings Area Office of Quality** in collaboration with Partnership to Advance Tribal Health (PATH) are conducting The Joint Commission (TJC) weekly sessions for all staff. The sessions have started at the Blackfeet, Fort Peck and Wind River Service Units. The sessions cover a wide variety of accreditation readiness topics from what to expect when the surveyors arrive to how we exemplify the mission, vision and goals of the Indian Health Service. Office of Quality will be implementing the readiness sessions at Northern Cheyenne, Crow and Fort Belknap Service Units in the coming months.

**Billings Area Office of Quality** continues work on the Billings Area Governance Revitalization Project with debriefings on templates and processes occurring after every round of Governing Board meetings. Billings Area shared the templates with the Bemidji Area IHS to solicit their feedback and to continue improving our reporting.

**Fort Belknap Service Unit** Quality Department is working with all departments to transfer all policies and procedures to the MCN database. This will assist with quality of care by policies being available to all employees. The new database will allow new employees to have access to policies and procedures.

**Goal 3: To strengthen IHS program management and operations**

**Billings Area Office** – Billings Area Director Bryce Redgrave participated in the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council Quarterly Meeting held December 15-16, 2021. Mr. Redgrave presented information to Montana and Wyoming Tribal Leaders on the FY 2022 President Budget, Billings Area FY 2024 Budget Formulation Work Session, COVID-19 vaccinations, Accreditation and the Little Shell Health Center.

**Wind River Service Unit** Executive Leadership has completed and implemented their 2021-2023 dynamic strategic plan to include the framework for three (3) initiatives from the IHS 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Initiatives include Leadership Development/Succession Planning, Clinical Quality and Safety (including The Joint Commission Accreditation for Ambulatory Clinics), Increase Access to Care, Patient Centered Medical Home Designation, Modernization Projects and Community Outreach Services. Each of these strategies include supporting tactics and support from our Quality Improvement Organization partner to address improvement processes at the Wind River Service Unit over the next two years.

**Wind River Service Unit** has updated their succession plan; after reviewing key leadership positions needs, knowledge, skills and abilities for current staff. Service Unit staff in our workforce are detailed to vacant or temporary leadership roles to gain training and work experience. The COVID-19 pandemic has

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shown the increased need to develop our leadership and incident command teams with staff for immediate action while implementing the immediate, short, and long-term development plans.

**Fort Belknap Service Unit** has begun engineering planning and drawings for the Service Unit ER renovation to add square footage and create a drive through drop off zone currently not available at the facility. The project will include COVID mitigation design to add additional zero pressure air rooms and allow areas for testing and screening.

**Billings Area Office of Tribal Programs:**

- The Office of Tribal Programs participated in the initial discussions and planning sessions for the IHS Tribal Consultation Policy Advisory and the Contract Support Cost Policy Workgroup.
- Staff worked with the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council Health Committee to fill the various Federal work group vacancies which included the representatives for the Tribal Consultation Policy, Contract Support Cost and Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee.
- On October 5, 2021, the Office of Tribal Programs and Finance Department held a technical assistance session on funding tables and the Self Determination Database with the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Finance Department and the newly selected Tribal Health Director.
- On December 13, 2021, the Office of Tribal Programs assisted and participated in the 105(L) Lease information session with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). CSKT operates a Title V Self-Governance Tribal Health Program which serves over 12,000 recipients, with facilities throughout the Flathead Reservation.