

**Albuquerque Area IHS
Direct Service Tribes Advisory Committee
FY 2023 4th Quarter Report
April – June 2023**

<p>Area Tribal Representatives: Donnie Garcia, Chairman, Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board</p>	<p>Federal Liaison: Randall Morgan, Director, Office of Tribal Self Determination, AAIHS Mary Beardsley, Program Analyst, Office of Tribal Self Determination, AAIHS</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

- In the past quarter, the Santa Fe Service Unit sponsored a Practical Immersion Experience (PIE) student from the University of New Mexico’s School of Medicine. Practical Immersion Experience students do community-based rotations in the summer between their first and second years, giving them an opportunity to experience clinical work earlier in their training than was historically available.
- Since 2020, the Public Health Nurse (PHN) program at the Acoma-Canoncito-Laguna Indian Health Center has provided valued public health nursing services to the Acoma Pueblo and surrounding communities to mitigate ongoing public health threats, including treatment and vaccination efforts. The PHN worked closely with the Pueblo of Acoma and Pueblo of Laguna on a daily basis and coordinated timely communication of numerous tests results and daily follow up reports on positive COVID-19 tests. In 2022, there were 7,200 patient encounters and 3,000 patient encounters since January 2023. PHN has seen 1,723 patients in April, May, and June 2023. The PHN continued to spearhead and coordinate the weekly COVID Vaccine clinics held every Thursday morning, including child and adult immunizations.
- Several key staff appointments were made at the Zuni Service Unit (ZSU) this past quarter, including a Director for the Women’s Health Program; Director of the Diabetes Program; a Chief Dentist; 3 Family Medicine Physicians; a Human Resource Assistant; and, a Nurse Extern (IHS Scholarship). The ZSU also maintains an active Medical Student and Residents Program that includes clinical rotations for physicians and optometry programs. ZSU also supports volunteer appointments of eligible adults and high school students from the local community to increase awareness of healthcare careers.
- This past quarter, the Albuquerque Area IHS’ Division of Contracts and Grants Management hosted their 3rd Annual Buy Indian Industry Day and inaugural Virtual Matchmaking event. Sixty-six Native American owned and controlled small businesses were matched with federal Contract Specialists within the Albuquerque Area and presented their capabilities to the federal acquisition workforce. The federal acquisition workforce includes Contracting Officers, Contracting Officer Representatives and Purchase Card holders. These federal specialists play a critical role in fulfilling an ongoing effort to increase procurements above and below the micro purchase limit with Native American small businesses. Acquisition workforce personnel secure services and supplies to support federally-operated healthcare centers that provide direct patient care and do their best to fully implement the Buy Indian Act.
- To continue to provide high quality care to our patients, the Mescalero Service Unit’s laboratory department is in the process of upgrading instrumentation to provide quality testing to our patients. The Colorectal Cancer screening initiative has been a huge challenge with low return rates of Fecal Occult Blood Test kits; however, our nursing team has been working to increase education and increase participation. Specifically focusing on age group of 45 – 75 years old. Participation of this age group assists in their health as screening tests can help find Cancer early and may reduce deaths from the disease. Clinical team is a participant of the E3 Champion Challenge and Pilot Program and

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has received letter of designation as such - Vaccine Strategy Immunization project to improve vaccine rates amongst Native Americans. Staff are actively participating with the Indian Health Service Modernization efforts to enhance/improve Electronic Health Record

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

- This past quarter, the Mescalero Service Unit’s Opioid Stewardship Program (OSP) was recognized for outstanding contributions to health literacy through the recognition of necessary patient education contributing to safe and effective pain medication prescribing. The OSP received a Health Literacy Team Champion Award to recognize IHS teams that demonstrates innovative, practical solutions, and contributes to effective communication to empower people to make informed decisions to improve their health. Specifically, the Program was created to respond to community calls for safe and effective pain relief by establishing an opioid stewardship program. The program collaborates with different health disciplines to focus on patient education and literacy. The opioid stewardship program's commitment to patient care is to provide safe prescriptions and education so that patients receive the right pain medication, for the right reasons, for the right length of time, and for the correct dose.
- In May 2023 Santa Fe Service Unit Executives held its enhanced quarterly New Employee Orientation to improve the onboarding process. The newly organized process transpired over a one day period and provided a full review of expectations and trainings specific to Santa Fe Service Unit.

Goal 3: To strengthen IHS program management and operations

- ACL continued to strengthen program management and operational coordination and collaboration with Medical Air Transport, EMTALA, tribal ambulance services and after-hours use and access to the morgue. ACL continued to work closely with multi-tribal operated emergency medical service programs, tribal fire and rescue units, State OMI Inspector, IHS Area Office programs and divisions, and Medical Air Transport in the New Mexico area.
- CDR Helen Ballantyne, Chief Nurse Executive for the Santa Fe Service Unit, has dedicated time to improve recruitment efforts for our service unit. She has met with the University of New Mexico, Luna Community College in Las Vegas, NM, and Santa Fe Community College to discuss opportunities for student clinical rotations in ambulatory care and public health nursing at Santa Fe Service Unit. CDR Ballantyne has also attended Career Day recruitment events at the University of New Mexico School of Nursing and another with the Emergency Nurses Association.
- In July, the Chief Contracting Officer organized training for Area federal personnel to enhance their understanding of Federal Appropriations Law. Approximately 40 federal staff attended the training, mostly staff who perform duties and responsibilities of a Contracting Officer Representative (COR). Federal staff that are CORs must achieve and retain certification since they have responsibility of overseeing a federal procurement contract with an outside vendor. CORs play a critical role in ensuring that contractors meet the commitment of their procurement contracts as prescribed by the Federal Acquisition Regulation. They also facilitate proper development of requirements and assist Contracting Officers in developing and managing their contracts.
- The Zuni Service Unit (ZSU) continued to enhance collaboration with the Pueblo of Zuni’s community health programs through health-related outreach and education activities to patients and families including:
 - ZSU’s medical staff collaborated with Zuni Tribe’s Shumak’olo:wa Health Center (Youth and Family Wellness Center) program director to present/educate about how poor mental health can

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increase the use of alcohol consumption. Presentations were delivered by a physician and a psychiatrist from ZSU, and a Zuni Tribal Council Member that focused on how mental health effects the body and the importance of establishing a healthy mind.

- Two community outreach/educational information activities on health benefits and the purchased referred care program were held at the Senior Center. Zuni Wellness Program staff joined a Social Security representative to deliver educational information related to social security retirement benefits.
- The Mescalero Service unit worked to identify several areas of improvement that were no longer a working model based on data, access, and trends in the clinic and urgent care. Services were aligned in these areas to improve and enhance contingencies during staff shortages, wait time and access to care during afterhours and weekends. The alignment improved the overall quality of care while focusing on the IHS mission.
- In May 2023, Ms. Sandra Lahi was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer at the Jicarilla Service Unit was made. Ms. Sandra Lahi, re-assumed this position as a civil servant after her retirement from the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service.