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NIHB Chair Promotes Funding for Indian Health on Capitol Hill

As the U.S. House of Representatives begins consideration of Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 appropriations bills, National Indian Health Board Chairperson, Cathy Abramson, of the Saulte Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, took to Capitol Hill to support increased funding for the Indian health care delivery system. Over two days on June 22nd and 23rd, Chairperson Abramson attended meetings with Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittees on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, and Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

During her meeting with Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), she urged the senior Member of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee and

enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation to fight for the President's request of a 14.1% increase in funding to the Indian Health Service (IHS) and to protect the agency from cuts, freezes, rollbacks, or rescissions. "As health care costs continue to skyrocket, this increase in funding will preserve basic programs within IHS, as well as allow the agency to advance programs that address overwhelming health needs in Indian Country," Chairperson Abramson explained.

The Chairperson also met with the staff of Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-MT), Chairman of the Labor, HHS, Education, and related agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, to support funding for the proposed SAMHSA Behavioral Health – Tribal Prevention Grant [see above article]. "On top of physical health disparities, Indian Country suffers from epidemic levels of behavioral health disparities," she told Chairman Rehberg. "With suicide the second leading cause of death for adolescents in Indian Country, funding for this program must become a priority for appropriators in the U.S. Congress."

The Chairperson's schedule also included meetings with the offices of Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)-Ranking Member of Labor, HHS, Education, Related Agencies Appropriations, Rep. Don Young (R-AK)-Chair of the Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs, and Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), Ranking Member for the Full Appropriations Committee.



Chairperson Abramson, along with the NIHB staff, continues to monitor the FY 2012 Appropriations process very closely, and will provide updates as it moves forward.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATES

CMS Eases Qualifications for EHR Incentive Program

In response to stakeholder concerns, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has changed its Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on its website pertaining to Tribal clinic eligibility for Electronic Health Record (EHR) Incentive Payments. The original language on the website required that Tribal clinics be paid as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to be eligible for the payments. This language has since been revised to say that all Tribal clinics will be treated as FQHCs for the purposes of the incentive payment program. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.cms.gov/EHRIncentivePrograms/>

Remaining questions can be directed to Michelle.Mills@cms.hhs.gov or Samuel.Schaffzin@cms.hhs.gov.

SAMHSA Modifies Mental Health and Substance Abuse Block Grants Based on Tribal Response

Based, in part, on the Tribal response to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) open comment period on the proposed unification of applications for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant (MHSBG) and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SAPTBG), SAMHSA is taking a new approach to the programs. Under this new approach, states and territories will consider new factors in their redesigned plans such as:

- Taking a broader approach in reaching beyond the populations they have historically served through block grants.

- Conducting a needs assessment and developing a plan that will identify and analyze the strengths, needs, and priorities of the state's/territory's behavioral health system, thereby painting a more complete picture of their behavioral health system.
- Designing and developing collaborative plans for health information systems, including grants and other funding.
- Forming strategic partnerships to provide individuals better access to good and modern behavioral health services.
- Increasing focus on recovery for persons experiencing mental health problems and substance use problems.
- Redesigning systems and services to be more accountable for improving the caliber and performance of services funded.
- Describing tribal consultation activities.

The revised application for these block grants has been posted on the *Federal Register*. SAMHSA will be accepting comments until July 18, 2011.

Federal Agencies Consult with Tribes on Indian Health Issues

Three Federal Agencies hosted face-to-face consultation with Tribal Leaders at the National Congress of American Indians' Annual Mid-Year Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin between June 13th and 16th.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration continued its consultation on the Behavioral Health – Tribal Prevention Grant, a new, multi-year discretionary grant program proposed in the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Budget Request. While in the past Tribes have been forced to request behavioral health funding from states (as states and territories are the only entities currently eligible for block grant funding), money available through this grant



would go directly to Tribes. The program would be non-competitive, meaning that Federally-Recognized Tribes could simply apply for the grant to receive their portion of the \$50 million available; \$50,000 per Tribe as a “basic” award. Tribes with greater needs could also apply for additional funds above this “basic” level. As Congress considers whether to fund the program, SAMHSA is consulting with Tribes on how the program should be structured, if funded.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was also in attendance to conduct the first of four Tribal consultations on the implementation of Tribal access to the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, as well as Federal Employee Group Life Insurance. To spur the consultation process, OPM has released four issue papers on the topics of eligibility, enrollment, termination of coverage/disenrollment, and Tribal employer and employee contributions. The comment period on these papers is open and comments may be directed to:

tribalprograms@opm.gov

In addition to consultation, OPM is creating a tribal-federal workgroup on these programs, for which it is currently seeking nominations. Good candidates will be those with technical knowledge, such as Tribal human resource managers or tribal managers with knowledge of their current health insurance program. Nominations can be sent to the above email address.

The next consultation on these programs is scheduled to be held on July 21st, 2011 at the California Rural Indian Health Board (CRIHB) and Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB) Joint Quarterly Meeting in Lincoln, CA.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/aca/tribes/index.asp>

Finally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was present to continue consultation on the implementation of the *Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010*. The new law makes changes to the USDA’s Child Nutrition

programs. Those new provisions with the potential to affect Tribes include:

- Dietary Guidelines for School Meals
- Compliance/Certification for New School Meal Patterns
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Patterns
- Community Eligibility – Eliminating individual applications in National School Lunch Program through community eligibility
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Policy
- Non-Discretionary Women Infant and Children (WIC) Provisions
- WIC EBT Provisions
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Ed Provision

For more information, please visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/Tribal/> or email: TribalAffairs@fns.usda.gov



NEXT WEEK IN WASHINGTON

THE HOUSE IS OUT OF SESSION

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
ROUNDTABLE ON, "CHANNELING THE
DISCOURSE: EXAMINING THE FUTURE OF
WATER IN INDIAN COUNTRY"**

TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2011

1:00 PM

628 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC

**JOINT NIHB/NCAI NATIONAL TRIBAL
CALL IN PREPARATION FOR THE IHS
TRIBAL CONSULTATION SUMMIT**

JUNE 30, 2011 AT 4:00 PM EST

PARTICIPANT DIAL-IN NUMBER(S):

TOLL-FREE DIAL-IN #: (866) 516-5964

CONFERENCE ID: 78479362

SAVE THE DATE

IHS TRIBAL CONSULTATION SUMMIT

JULY 6 -7, 2011

BETHESDA, MD

[DRAFT AGENDA](#)

[REGISTRATION FORM](#)

CONTACT: ANNA JOHNSON (301) 443-7821

ANNA.JOHNSON2@NIHB.GOV

**NIHB PRE-IHS CONSULTATION SUMMIT
TRIBAL CAUCUS MEETING**

JULY 6, 2011

7:00 – 9:00 AM

BETHESDA NORTH MARRIOTT HOTEL

AND CONFERENCE CENTER

ROOM: TBA

5701 MARINELLI ROAD

BETHESDA, MARYLAND



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For More Information Contact:

Jennifer Cooper, JD, Legislative Director
jcooper@nihb.org or

Liz Malerba, Legislative Assistant
lmalerba@nihb.org

