



April 27, 2020

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

It is truly an honor to continue serving our American Indian and Alaska Native people as the newly confirmed Indian Health Service director. I also thank the President and [HHS Secretary](#) for entrusting me with this responsibility and appreciate the confidence shown by the Senate confirmation. I remain committed to advocating for Indian country, especially as we fight the coronavirus disease. To that end, last week, Secretary Azar [renewed](#) the Public Health Emergency Determination, recognizing the continued threat that the Coronavirus disease poses to our communities. The IHS remains resolute in combatting the COVID-19 epidemic through our partnerships with Tribes, Urban Indian organizations, and through our cross coordinated efforts with our federal, state and local partners.

On April 24th, I met with the FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor and our other federal partners during the daily COVID-19 FEMA and HHS Interagency teleconference. As the entire federal government continues to fight this epidemic with a whole-of-government response, [FEMA and HHS are collecting and sharing best practices and lessons learned](#). The [FEMA Coronavirus Emergency Management Best Practices](#) are intended to help medical practitioners, emergency managers, and other critical stakeholders learn from each other's approaches and apply solutions to current response and recovery operations. I encourage you to explore these best practices and contribute your ideas for how we are combatting COVID-19 in Indian Country.

On [April 23](#), we issued a letter announcing the final allocation for the remaining \$367 million of the \$1.032 billion provided to the agency in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This funding was allocated across the Indian Health system to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus pandemic. These resources are in addition to the \$600 million in funding from the CARES Act already allocated to IHS, Tribes, and Urban Indian Healthcare programs, and the \$134 million in funding from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, and the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act. Thank you for providing critical input throughout this process during Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer sessions.

In response to the numerous questions the IHS has received from Tribes and Urban Indian Health organizations requesting guidance on COVID-19 funding distributions, the IHS has developed [COVID-19 Funding Guidance for Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations](#).

On April 22, [HHS announced](#) the allocation plan for the remaining CARES Act [Provider Relief Fund](#). This provided an additional \$400 million for the IHS, Tribal, and Urban Indian Health programs. This allocation also includes \$10 billion for Hospitals in High Impact Areas or areas with high rates of COVID-19 infection and/or hospitalizations. Please visit the [IHS Calendar](#) for upcoming Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer sessions regarding this funding.

I want to remind you all that the HHS is currently engaged in Tribal Consultation on its Fiscal Year 2022 HHS Budget Request. The deadline for Tribal leaders to submit written testimony to consultation@hhs.gov is this **Friday, May 1**. Resources to assist Tribes in making recommendations can be found [here](#).

All of the [250 Abbott ID now COVID-19 analyzer machines](#) that the IHS received have been [distributed](#). Over the past month, IHS has expanded testing capacity from 98 sites to 298 sites boosted mostly by the distribution of these analyzer machines. These sites include locations in some of our most rural and vulnerable populations. We continue to find other ways to expand testing. The IHS utilizes all methods of testing for COVID-19, including state or regional public health labs, in-house point-of-care testing, commercial labs that have sufficient processing capacity that some Indian healthcare sites may not have, and our academic partners. With this expansion in testing capability across the Indian health system we do expect to see an increase in the number of positive cases reported. We continue to follow CDC guidelines to determine who should be tested. For more information about testing, please visit ihs.gov/coronavirus for answers to frequently asked questions on testing.

Please continue to join us on our weekly Thursday [Indian Country COVID-19 Response team call](#) where we will work with our partners across the federal government to provide critical updates and information on how we are working together to address COVID-19. This week's call will focus on testing. In addition, [every Tuesday](#) the IHS meets with Urban Indian Organization leaders so that they can provide comments and ask questions of our federal officials. We hope you will join us.

Respectfully,

Michael

RADM Michael D. Weahkee, MBA, MHSA
Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service
Director, Indian Health Service

Below is general information on various topics that could be of interest to you and your community. Web links are included, where you can find more information on each topic.

Meetings & Webinars Happening This Week:

- [Tuesday, April 28, 4:00 p.m. ET: IHS Urban Indian Organization Leader Call – COVID-19 Update](#)
- **[Wednesday, April 29, 3:00 p.m. ET: Health Resources and Services Administration teleconference](#)** (Dial-in: 888-989-9726; Passcode: 9044754) – Plan to establish a Tribal Advisory Committee.
- [Wednesday, April 29, 5:00 p.m. ET: AAIP Ask a Native Physician COVID-19 Town Hall](#)
- **Thursday, April 30, 2:00 p.m. ET: Administration for Children & Families Office of Child Support Enforcement Webinar** – There is a new [COVID-19 FAQ webpage](#) with a Tribal section that specifically addresses non-federal share waiver requests under 45 CFR 309.130(e)(1)(ii). The webinar will work with Tribes that have questions on submitting a waiver request and will go over the required application items. Questions can also be submitted in advance by COB on April 29 to OCSE.Tribal@acf.hhs.gov.
- [Thursday, April 30, 4:00 p.m. ET: Indian Country COVID-19 Response Update Call](#)

Funding Opportunities:

- [NEW! Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\) Rural Tribal COVID-19 Response Program – applications due May 6.](#)
- [HHS announced nearly \\$1 Billion in CARES Act funding to states, Tribes and community-based organizations to help meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities as communities implement measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
- [The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) is distributing \\$110 million to help Americans with substance use disorders and serious mental illness receive the treatment they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)
- [HRSA announces new funding opportunity for Tribes. Applications are due May 6, 2020.](#)
- [HRSA will launch a new COVID-19 Uninsured Program Portal, allowing health care providers who have conducted COVID-19 testing or provided treatment for uninsured COVID-19 patients on or after February 4, 2020 to request claims reimbursement.](#)
- [\\$45 Million in Funding to Support Child Welfare Services](#)

Testing and Supplies

- [FDA updated their FAQs on Diagnostic Testing](#)
- [NIH developed Treatment Guidelines to inform clinicians how to care for patients with COVID-19.](#)
- [The FDA issued a face mask emergency use authorization \(EUA\)](#)
- [CDC updated their guidance on strategies to optimize PPE](#)
- [FEMA released updated guidance on Addressing PPE Needs in Non-Healthcare Setting.](#)

Guidance and Other Resources

- [HHS Novel Coronavirus Resources](#)

- [The White House released a document on aligning federal agency operations with the national guidelines for opening up America again.](#)
- [HHS released this Toolkit and guidance to help state, local, tribal, and territorial \(SLTT\) entities address potential capacity and capability gaps in healthcare systems](#)
- [HHS released a new webpage on mental health and coping during the pandemic](#)
- [New Telehealth resources website.](#)
- The IHS issued “[Guidance on Indian Health Service COVID-19 Funding Distribution for Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations](#)” and a table titled [FY 2020 Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Funding Allocations](#) are now available on the IHS COVID-19 resource page: <https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/resources/>
- [CMS announced new regulatory requirements for nursing homes that will require nursing homes to inform residents, their families and representatives of COVID-19 cases in their facilities.](#)
- [CMS released an updated FAQ document on Medicare fee-for-service billing](#)
- [CMS released information for RHCs and FQHCs on Telehealth and Virtual Communications Flexibilities during COVID-19.](#)
- [CMS released additional blanket waivers related to care for patients in Long-Term Care Hospitals \(LTCHs\), temporary expansion locations of Rural Health Clinics \(RHCs\) and Federally Qualified Health Centers \(FQHCs\)](#)
- [CDC created a new webpage that provides support for states, tribes, localities and territories to help them reopen safely.](#)
- [CDC updated their Community Mitigation Framework.](#)
- [CDC updated their FAQs on Testing and Reporting Cases for Laboratories](#)
- [CDC Creates new Tool to Estimate Hospital Surge Capacity](#)
- [Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers guidance](#)
- [Updated information was released for Businesses and Workplaces that includes reopening guidance](#)