



OCT 27 2010

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am writing to **update you on the IHS Director's Tribal Advisory Workgroup on Consultation** (Workgroup) and their recommendations to improve the Tribal consultation process. In August 2009, I announced the beginning of a consultation on how to improve the Indian Health Service (IHS) Tribal consultation process. After receiving comments from Tribes, I convened the IHS Director's Tribal Advisory Workgroup on Consultation in December 2009 and January 2010 to develop recommendations. This Workgroup consists of two Tribal leaders from each IHS Area. In January, I sent you a letter with the 6 pages of recommendations from the Workgroup and requested your input. The Workgroup met this month in Denver, Colorado, to review input to date and progress on implementation of the recommendations.

The Workgroup reviewed their original recommendations and discussed their experience with the IHS consultation process so far. IHS reviewed how the consultation process has been improved, including better announcements of consultations, use of a variety of activities to gather input, shared decision-making and more reporting and transparency about consultation, including the Director's Blog announcements, and our tribal consultation Web site in development. The Workgroup continues to support the recommendations, acknowledges that progress has been made, and is committed to working with the IHS Director on further implementation efforts. The workgroup members also wanted to expand these efforts more in the Area and local levels, and assist Tribes on the next steps after consultation.

The Workgroup made **additional recommendations**:

- Formalize the Workgroup as an official IHS Advisory Group to give advice to the IHS Director on a regular basis
- Revisit the IHS Tribal Consultation Policy after reviewing the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Tribal consultation workgroup's recommended changes to the HHS Tribal consultation policy
- Formalize the workgroup's recommendations on consultation, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), charter, or accord and/or add to the IHS Tribal consultation policy
- Continue implementing the Workgroup's recommendations, including
 - o complete development of Web site as a central place to get Tribal consultation information, including
 - a link with all Tribal Leader letters
 - information on current consultations
 - updates on Workgroup activities, including minutes, summaries, membership, recommendations, and outcomes
- Convene a "Tribal Consultation Summit" for **Tribal leaders** and I/T/U leadership/staff/technical advisors to attend to learn about current consultation activities,

review current Workgroup activities and make recommendations. **Activities at the Consultation Summit** could include:

- creating a vision for where we should be
 - allowing Tribal Leaders to express their vision
 - discussing consultation recommendations
 - discussing implementation/outcomes
 - interacting with IHS tribal advisory workgroups so they get feedback from Tribes in person
 - training/education on topics, such as ACA/IHCIA, CHS, budget formulation and the opportunity to give input
 - use of technology to allow participation by those who cannot attend
 - holding this summit as a potential annual/regular event
- Continue to distribute consultation information widely through various formats, such as through Tribal organizations, publications like The Provider, and Tribal meetings such as NCAI, and NIHB
 - Support the shared decision-making process and further institutionalize throughout consultation activities
 - Expand consultation improvements to Area and local levels, including training of staff, incorporation of the workgroup recommendations, face to face meetings of Tribes and Area Directors/CEOs, and development of consultation performance measures
 - The Workgroup members plan to meet at the National Congress of American Indians Annual Conference in November to discuss action items from the consultation process during the health committee, education or human resources committee meetings

The Workgroup is committed to communicating more with Tribes on how to improve the consultation process and to hear your comments as the recommendations are incorporated into everyday practice in IHS over time. If you would like to send **additional comments to the Workgroup**, please e-mail them to consultation@ihs.gov or mail comments to the address below.

Thank you for your input throughout the past year on how to improve the IHS Tribal consultation process. I am grateful for the partnership with the Workgroup and with all Tribes to addressing this important topic.

Sincerely,

/Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H./

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Director

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