



AUG 18 2008

Dear Tribal Leader/Tribal Health Director:

The Indian Health Service (IHS) is committed to keeping you up-to-date on funding opportunities for research to meet the health needs of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. To that end, I would like to inform you about an upcoming grant opportunity that has come about through an ongoing collaboration between the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Tribes, Tribal Organizations (including Tribal Colleges) and tribally authorized Indian Health Boards are eligible to form partnerships with research institutions and apply for funding to create Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH). The NARCH initiative, now in its eighth year and sixth funding cycle, provides funding to AI/AN Tribes or tribally based organizations to create partnerships with research institutions and conduct high quality biomedical, behavioral and health services research that will be relevant to the needs of Tribes.

A formal NARCH VI Announcement will be issued in the **Federal Register** in December 2008. The receipt date for completed NARCH VI application submissions will be May 14, 2009. The NARCH VI grants would begin in fiscal year 2010.

Because it often requires considerable lead time to develop partnerships and collaborative relationships, we wanted to inform you as soon as possible of the expected announcement schedule. We hope this will enable you to find and/or select useful research partners and to develop your own Tribal research agendas and projects in time to apply for this cycle of NARCH program funding. Unfortunately, we do not currently anticipate a NARCH VII cycle of funding in fiscal year 2011.

NARCH Program Objectives

To address concerns particular to AI/AN communities regarding medical research, the IHS advocates full participation by Tribes in all aspects of research and research training. To accomplish this goal, in addition to other objectives set by Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Indian Health Boards, the NARCH program pursues the following objectives:

- Development of a cadre of AI/AN scientists and health professionals engaged in biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and health services research who will be competitive in securing extramural research funding from the NIH and other research agencies;
- Development of partnerships and collaborative relationships between academic institutions and AI/AN Organizations to conduct peer-reviewed research linked to reducing health disparities and developing interventions to improve the health status of AI/AN communities; and
- To reduce distrust by AI/AN communities and people toward medical research by offering them some greater control over the research process.

Each NARCH applicant's grant undergoes a rigorous peer review process established by the NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR). The NIH/CSR priority scores determine those research projects with the best science, as well as the best designs and strategies to meet the objectives of the NARCH program. For more information about NARCH program eligibility and application procedures, including a list of current NARCH grantees and projects, please visit our NARCH Web site at: <http://www.ihs.gov/medicalprograms/research/narch.cfm/>. The previous NARCH program announcement can be found at: <http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Research/narch-V.cfm>.

Plans Underway at Headquarters to Offer NARCH Technical Assistance

The IHS is now developing plans to provide technical assistance for NARCH applicants. Web-based training as well as one or more face-to-face training sessions will be offered, based on the response to this letter and the NARCH VI announcement in the **Federal Register**.

To indicate your interest and receive further information about technical assistance for NARCH applicants, please send an e-mail with your full contact information to narch@ihs.gov with the words "Technical Assistance" in the Subject Line. Additional questions about the NARCH program can also be sent to this e-mail address.

If you would like to speak to someone about the NARCH program, please contact either Alan Trachtenberg, M.D., M.P.H., or Phillip Smith, M.D., M.P.H., at (301) 443-4700. I look forward to working with you as we continue to build a strong infrastructure to meet the health research needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Sincerely yours,

/Robert G. McSwain/

Director