



March 23, 2020

Dear Tribal and Urban Indian Organization Leaders:

I want to thank you for continuing to join us on our weekly COVID-19 Federal update calls with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, [Department of Health and Human Services](#), bureaus of [Indian Affairs](#), [Indian Education](#), and FEMA to discuss COVID-19. This week's call will specifically highlight FEMA's role and its continued coordination with HHS and the [Indian Health Service](#) to ensure that tribal needs are understood and met.

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced it [will provide \\$80 million in funding to tribes, tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations](#) to support our nation's response to COVID-19.

On March 18, President Trump signed the Families First Coronavirus Response Act into law providing \$64 million to support the cost of COVID-19 testing across the Indian health system. Additionally, IHS will receive \$70 million from the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund, appropriated in the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act. These funds are available to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

The IHS is seeking input on funding from tribal and urban stakeholders. We will hold an all tribes call from 5-6 pm ET today. Details for the call are posted [here](#). We will hold an urban confer virtual session on Wednesday, March 25, 2020 from 12-1pm ET as part of the [National Council on Urban Indian Health Virtual Conference](#).

The public health threat posed by COVID-19 is very high, both globally and to the United States. This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. As we've said previously, we expect to see additional cases in the U.S. We must be vigilant in our efforts to slow the spread of infections among within the communities that we serve. We continue to work closely with tribal, state, and local partners, as well as with other public health partners.

We continue to receive many requests for resources, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing supplies. We encourage you all to make requests through your normal supply channels. When the President declared a federal emergency last week it activated FEMA to be the lead agency for response. While we work closely with [FEMA](#) we know that you have many questions. FEMA will be joining us on Thursday for the call.

Please continue to check [cdc.gov/covid19](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19) for the latest information.

In addition to the above resources, please see the list below. We look forward to more discussion and communication in the days ahead. Please know that we are doing everything we can to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

COVID-19 related updates from across HHS

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: HEAD START

Program Closure: In response to COVID-19, the Office of Head Start is advising grantees to coordinate with local health authorities and implement their existing policies and procedures related to closure of Head Start and Early Head Start centers during infectious disease outbreaks. Closure of centers in areas heavily impacted by COVID-19 is an important element of containing and limiting its spread. Many Head Start and Early Head Start programs are following the lead of school systems and local health authorities and closing centers. If program operations are impacted by the coronavirus, please reach out to your ACF Regional Office to inform them of any programmatic changes.

Wages and Benefits: In recognition of the unique circumstances associated with COVID-19, OHS is directing programs to continue to pay wages and provide benefits for staff unable to report to work during center closures necessary to address COVID-19. This additional emergency response flexibility is important to ensure critical grants management activities can continue during closures. It will help ensure staff are ready and able to return to work as soon as it is possible to resume operations. This flexibility remains in effect through April 30, 2020 unless further extended by OHS.

Additional Flexibilities: The guidance from [ACF-HS-IM-19-01 General Disaster Recovery Flexibilities](#) can be applied to programs impacted by COVID-19. Public health emergencies can also form the basis of a disaster declaration.

Program Options and Hours of Program Operations: In the event of a disaster, OHS will allow

any grantee in or near the affected area to serve impacted or displaced children in any program option or options without obtaining advance approval. This applies to a conversion of a program segment, such as a center, to another program option so programs can accommodate as many children as possible. This time-limited exception to required procedures for obtaining OHS permission to convert services to a different program option as a "change to the scope or objectives of a program" under 45 CFR §75.308(c)(1)(i) is based on the need for programs to act quickly in response to a large-scale and widespread emergency situation in order to ensure children's safety and well-being. Also for the remainder of the current school year, significantly affected programs may add or reduce hours or days of program operations without obtaining prior approval as long as the changes can be justified. Finding creative ways to reach out and serve these families is encouraged. Grantees are required to notify their Regional Office of the actions taken as soon as it is practical using the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) correspondence.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Managing & Recognizing Stress: The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. [Sharing the facts](#) about COVID-19 and understanding the actual risk to yourself and people you care about can make an outbreak less stressful. When you share accurate information about COVID-19 you can help make people feel less stressed and allow you to connect with them. Learn more about [taking care of your emotional health](#). Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations. How you respond to the outbreak can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. (TTY 1-800-846-8517)

Resources for Parents and Caregivers: Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared. There are many things you can do to support your child: Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and [share facts](#) about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand. Learn more about [helping children cope](#).

Resources for Responders and Providers: Responding to COVID-19 can take an emotional toll on you. There are things you can do to reduce secondary traumatic stress (STS) reactions: Acknowledge that STS can impact anyone helping families after a traumatic event;

and learn the symptoms including physical (fatigue, illness) and mental (fear, withdrawal, guilt). Learn more [tips for taking care of yourself](#) during emergency response.

Resources for Persons Released from Quarantine: Being separated from others if a healthcare provider thinks you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be stressful, even if you do not get sick. Everyone feels differently after coming out of quarantine. Some feelings include: Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious; and guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine. Children may also feel upset or have other strong emotions if they, or someone they know, has been released from quarantine. [You can help your child cope.](#)

Below is a listing of General Resources to Aid You in Finding Information:

White House Task Force Website: www.Coronavirus.gov

CDC Website with the most up-to-date information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

[Indian Health Service](#) coronavirus website

FEMA's [guidance](#) related to the tribal recipient/subrecipient assistance process pursuant to the nationwide COVID-19 emergency.

Information for Healthcare Providers, First Responders, and Research Facilities:

- [Information for Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [Resources for State, Local, Territorial and Tribal Health Departments](#)
- [Resources for Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with COVID-19 or Persons Under Investigation in Healthcare Settings](#)
- [Information for Laboratories](#)
- [Resources for First Responders](#)
- [Guidance for Public Health Professionals Managing People with COVID-19 in Home Care and Isolation Who Have Pets or Other Animals](#)
- [FAQs and Considerations for Patient Triage, Placement and Hospital Discharge](#)
- [Guidance for Homeless Shelters](#)
- [Guidance for Hemodialysis Facilities](#)
- CMS: [Information on COVID-19 and Current Emergencies](#)
- CMS: [Guidance for Hospice Agencies](#)
- CMS: [Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act Requirements and Implications Related to COVID-19](#)
- CMS: [FAQs for State Survey Agency and Accrediting Organizations](#)

- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19](#)

Information for Families and Households:

- [Information on COVID-19 for Pregnant Women and Children](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Household Readiness](#)
- [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations for U.S. Households](#)
- [Guidance for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Homes and Residential Communities](#)
- [FAQ: COVID-19 and Children](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19](#)

Thank you for your leadership and your partnership, for the benefit of the patients that we serve.

Respectfully,

Michael

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