

Indian Health Service Forensic Healthcare Programs

- In 2023, the Indian Health Service (IHS) Division of Nursing Services (DNS) created and funded an initiative entitled, “*Forensic Healthcare*.” This \$10 million Federal initiative includes Agency Service Units, IHS clinics, and IHS hospitals in 16 sites. Our *Forensic Healthcare* initiative was designed to support capacity building among local Tribal communities by developing and expanding existing forensic nursing programs. Funding for this effort ensures the availability of medical forensic services and resources for all American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) individuals affected by sexual assault, sexual abuse, and intimate and domestic violence.
- On September 25, 2023, the IHS DNS awarded a \$5.5 million dollar contract for a Forensic Nursing Consultation Program (FNCP). This 5-year contract, which will continue until 2028, was awarded to the Texas A&M Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing. The award has helped enhance and expand the pool of qualified forensic health care-related professionals throughout our workforce activities and across all IHS, Tribal, and Urban Indian (I/T/U) facilities by providing Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Sexual Assault Examiner/Forensic Nurse Examiner (SANE/SAE/FNE) training, education, and technical assistance for health care providers. The *free* training funded by this award has ensured that I/T/U providers are prepared to offer our patients trauma-informed medical forensic examinations when needed in the aftermath of violent crimes, such as sexual assault and abuse, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, strangulation, and human trafficking. Funding from this contract has also supported continuing education and mentorship opportunities, enhancing forensic health care efforts across Indian Country. Additional information on this initiative and related forensic health care resources are available on the IHS website at <https://www.ihs.gov/forensichealthcare/training/>.
- In 2015, the IHS Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) program became a nationally coordinated program that provided culturally appropriate domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and intervention resources to AI/AN communities with a focus on providing trauma-informed services. In fiscal year 2022, the IHS awarded \$8.4 million in funding for the DVP grant program to 41 grants, which included support for forensic health care services. The 5-year cohort supported Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations in developing and expanding programs by incorporating prevention efforts that address social, spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being of victims through the integration of culturally appropriate practices and trauma-informed services. The DVP program also provided models, training sessions, and best and promising practices for grantees and community members. For additional information about DVP program outcomes, please visit the IHS website at <https://www.ihs.gov/dvpi/>.