



**Indian Health Service
Press Release**

October 16, 2024
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Biden-Harris Administration Takes Groundbreaking Action to Expand Health Care Access by Covering Traditional Health Care Practices

Today, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), approved section 1115 demonstration amendments that allow, for the first time ever, Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage of traditional health care practices provided by Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities, Tribal facilities, and urban Indian Organizations (UIO). Today’s action is expected to improve access to culturally appropriate health care and improve the quality of care and health outcomes for tribal communities in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Oregon, and will support IHS, Tribal, and UIO facilities in serving their patients.

“Traditional health care practices have been a way of life in many communities. And they are extremely important for American Indian and Alaska Native populations,” said **HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra**. “But, too often, health insurance does not cover them. With Medicaid and CHIP’s inclusion of traditional health care practices at certain IHS facilities, we are extending access to culturally appropriate, quality health care in Tribal communities.”

“Today’s announcement continues the work of the Biden-Harris Administration to make health care more accessible and more equitable across the country, including for American Indian and Alaska Native communities,” said **CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure**. “By strengthening access to traditional health care practices, these innovative state demonstrations can play a crucial role in reducing health disparities and improving health across tribal communities.”

“The Indian Health Service is the 17th largest health care system in the nation, and as director, I am thrilled by today’s announcement,” said **IHS Director Roselyn Tso**. “American Indian and Alaska Natives have been endowed by our ancestors a deep and priceless wealth of traditional healing knowledge. These practices have sustained our people’s health for generations and continue to serve as a vital link between culture, science, and wellness in many of our communities. We appreciate the Administration’s commitment to move forward with covering this care, and the IHS is honored to be a partner in this essential work.”



American Indians and Alaska Natives experience significantly worse health disparities compared to the general population, including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, cancer, mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and suicide. Studies have shown that traditional health care practices can improve outcomes for people with various conditions, including mental health and substance use disorders. American Indians and Alaska Natives have long recognized the contribution of traditional healers and practitioners who are valued for their role in aiding the healing process. Some Tribes see traditional health care practices as a fundamental element of health care that can help patients with specific physical and mental ailments. Today's section 1115 demonstration approvals aim to improve health outcomes and access to culturally appropriate care for Tribal citizens, and is the latest action demonstrating the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to support and invest in Indigenous communities across the country.

For additional information about each state's 1115 demonstration amendment approval, please visit the approvals on [Medicaid.gov](https://www.medicaid.gov):

- **Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)**
 - <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demonstrations/downloads/az-hccc-dmstrn-apprvl-10162024.pdf>
- **California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM)**
 - <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demonstrations/downloads/ca-calaim-dmstrn-appvl-10162024.pdf>
- **New Mexico Turquoise Care**
 - <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demonstrations/downloads/nm-turquoise-care-dmstrtn-aprvl-10162024.pdf>
- **Oregon Health Plan (OHP)**
 - <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/>

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