



## Indian Health Service Clinical Strategic Initiative Native Hearts



### **Background:**

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in the United States and represents a major health disparity resulting in premature death among American Indian and Alaska Native people (AI/AN). According to [data from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#), CVD is more likely to be fatal in American Indians relative to other races, with mortality rates 20% higher than in the general population. IHS remains committed to reducing AI/AN health disparities through systematic quality-improvement clinical performance strategies. Mitigating the risk of CVD-related illness and death in AI/AN populations requires a pro-active approach that prioritizes evidence-based early diagnosis and treatment in tribal communities.

### **Strategic Initiative:**

IHS advocates a comprehensive strategy to reduce CVD-related morbidity and mortality among AI/AN people. As part of our [Native Hearts Strategic Initiative](#), IHS will support federal, tribal, and Urban Indian Organization programs as they develop and implement strategies to ensure the guideline-based diagnosis and management of;

- Coronary Heart Disease
- Heart Failure
- Hypertension
- Atrial Fibrillation

### **Guidance and Resources:**

IHS Areas and I/T/U Facilities are encouraged to collaborate with tribal, local, regional, state, academic/professional and federal partners **to support a “get-with-the-guidelines” approach** to enhance awareness of CVD and risk-factors, take measures to mitigate the risks of CVD, and support evidence-based diagnosis and treatment of CVD through activities such as health education, screening and early diagnosis, and team-based clinical care. In addition, a proactive multi-disciplinary approach is advocated that involves **Area and Facility** leadership as well as staff in medical, pharmacy, nursing, care management/referral care, information technology, and other support roles.

### **Areas and Facilities are encouraged to;**

- Implement guideline-based strategies for the diagnosis and management of cardiovascular disease as a routine part of CVD-related care in IHS clinical settings as well as care management/planning, including referral care.
- Support innovative approaches to enhance evidence-based care for CVD in tribal communities. These include education regarding CVD risk factors, screening & early intervention, and system-based protocols to ensure care that aligns with clinical guidelines.