



Indian Health Services

The Federal Health Program for
American Indians and Alaska
Natives

Our Mission

to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level

Our Vision

healthy communities and quality health care systems through strong partnerships and culturally responsive practices

Strategic Goals

- to ensure that comprehensive, culturally appropriate personal and public health services are available and accessible to American Indian and Alaska Native people;
- to promote excellence and quality through innovation of the Indian health system into an optimally performing organization; and
- to strengthen IHS program management and operations

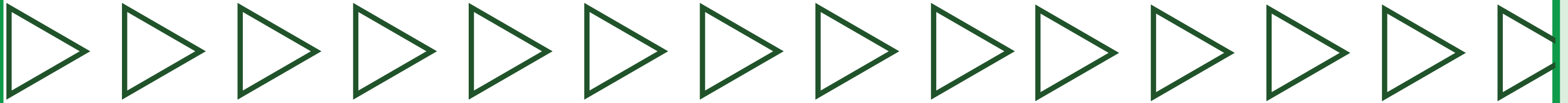
The Indian Health Service, an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for providing federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The provision of health services to members of federally-recognized tribes grew out of the special government-to-government relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes. This relationship, established in 1787, is based on Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, and has been given form and substance by numerous treaties, laws, Supreme Court decisions, and Executive Orders. The IHS is the principal federal health care provider and health advocate for Indian people, and its goal is to raise their health status to the highest possible level. The IHS provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to **574 federally recognized tribes** in 37 states.

For more information:

<https://www.ihs.gov/aboutihs/>



Challenges Faced



Limited Funding

One of the biggest challenges faced by IHS is limited funding. The government often allocates inadequate funds to healthcare systems that primarily cater to the Native American population. The resulting insufficient funding can lead to subpar healthcare facilities and diminished resources for critical care.

Inadequate Staffing

IHS faces challenges in hiring and retaining physicians, nurses, and other healthcare staff. There is a shortage of healthcare professionals, especially in the rural and remote areas where the Indian Reservations are located. The vacancies in the healthcare team can lead to an increased workload for healthcare providers, which can impact the quality of care provided.

Geographical Barriers

Many Native American communities live in remote or rural areas. Thus, access to healthcare services is limited due to geographical barriers such as the absence of adequate healthcare facilities, transportation, and telehealth facilities, which can prevent them from accessing quality health care.

Health Disparities

Health disparities, such as higher rates of chronic diseases, cancer, and infant mortality experienced by many Native American communities, continue to be a significant challenge for IHS. These health disparities result from a combination of environmental, social and economic factors as well as the lack of access to quality healthcare services.

Strained Infrastructure

Many healthcare facilities operated by IHS are old and outdated. The lack of funding and infrastructure can lead to inadequate maintenance of equipment and facilities, which can compromise the safety and reliability of the healthcare systems.