



DEC 1 0 2003

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am informing you of changes to the fiscal year (FY) 2004 user population timeline and adjustment standards to further improve user count data quality. The new cut-off date for FY 2004 data transmission is November 15, 2004. This deadline enables Headquarters to publish final user population data by December 31, 2004, which will translate into an accelerated budget formulation process and a swifter allocation of resources.

My goal for the Indian Health Service (IHS) user population counts is for them to be accurate as possible. Accurate user population counts for Areas, service units, and operating units are essential for budget formulation, sound resource allocation decisions, analyses of health data, and the establishment of policies that improve the health of the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people.

The Tribal/IHS health delivery system is composed of hundreds of sites that are very different from one another and that submit individually identifiable registration and encounter data to the National Patient Information Reporting System (NPIRS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The data are then tabulated into user counts by applying the same standards and definitions to all sites.

Effective for FY 2004 and for subsequent years, the user counts will be based on individually identifiable registration and encounter data received in NPIRS repositories in Albuquerque. There will be no adjustments made for non-received data except in the rare instance of information system problems that remain unresolved despite demonstrated diligence. Exceptions may include data system migration and export issues beyond the control of the reporting site. Data entry backlog will not be considered a valid reason to adjust user counts.

These changes to both the FY 2004 timeline and the user population adjustment process will greatly enhance our ability to efficiently and effectively serve the health needs of your Tribe and communities. Your cooperation with these changes is appreciated.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Edna Paisano, Principal Statistician, Office of Program Support, on (301) 443-1180.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Grim, D.D.S., M.H.S.A.
Assistant Surgeon General
Director