



Indian Health Service Press Release

IHS-9-2004
May 14, 2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: (301) 443-3593, FAX (301) 443-0507

Tucson Area Indian Health Service and Tohono O'odham Nation to Hold Groundbreaking Ceremony for New Westside Health Center

On May 20, 2004, the Tucson Area Office of the Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Tohono O'odham Nation will be holding a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Westside Health Center in San Simon, Arizona.

"Building this health center on the far western end of the Tohono O'odham reservation will provide real benefits to the area's Tribal population," HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said. "Some of the communities in the farthest western reaches of the reservation are more than 90 miles away from the nearest Indian Health Service hospital. This center will give those residents a far more accessible place to receive health care."

The IHS has entered into a Joint Venture Construction Program (JVCP) Agreement with the Tohono O'odham Nation, an American Indian Tribe located in the south central portion of Arizona, for the construction of this tribally-owned 28,200 square-foot ambulatory health care center in the west end of the Tohono O'odham reservation near San Simon, Arizona. The JVCP Agreement was entered into under provisions of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). The IHCIA authorized an innovative approach to providing health care facilities where a Tribe designs and constructs a tribally-owned health care facility to IHS standards. In return, the IHS provides the initial equipment for the health center, and leases the facility from the Tribe under a no-cost 20-year lease, during which period the IHS is responsible for including funding for the staffing and operation of the center in its annual budget requests.

"This facility demonstrates the successful exercise of self-determination by the Tohono O'odham Nation in fulfilling its commitment to improving the health status and access to services for its members living on the reservation," stated Dr. Charles W. Grim, Director of IHS. "It also reflects the commitment of President George W. Bush, the HHS, and the IHS to the goal of eliminating health disparity rates for American Indians and Alaska Natives."

"The IHS is pleased to be working in partnership with the Tohono O'odham Nation on this important project," said Taylor J. Satala, Director for the Tucson Area IHS.

The new health center will provide a full range of ambulatory care and community health services for the residents of the Westside Service Area of the Sells Service Unit. Specific services to be provided by the IHS include general medical ambulatory care, dental, optometry, laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, and part of the community health services. The Tohono O'odham Nation Health Department will provide behavioral health services, including psychological and alcohol/substance abuse services; community health services for health education and diabetes education; the Community Health Representatives Program; and the Women, Infant and Children Program. The new health center has been planned for a projected user population of approximately 2,275 tribal members, with an estimated 8,222 primary care provider visits and 16,419 outpatient visits annually, and a total projected staff of 57 (49 IHS employees and 8 tribal employees).



NOTICE TO EDITORS: For additional information on this subject, please contact the IHS Public Affairs Office at 301-443-3593. Additional information about the IHS is available on the IHS website <http://www.ihs.gov> and <http://info.ihs.gov>

