

## Policy and Procedures in reference to P.L. 95-341

### Purpose:

1. The policy of the Indian Health Service during the course of administering health services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives (referred jointly as Native Americans) is to protect and preserve the inherent right of all Native Americans to believe, express and exercise their traditional religions.
2. The Indian Health Service has continued to recognize the value and efficacy to traditional beliefs, ceremonies, and practices of the healing of body, mind and spirit. Faith is most often an integral part of the healing process and provides support for purposeful living. It is, therefore, the policy of the Indian Health Service to encourage a climate of respect and acceptance in which an individual's private traditional beliefs become a part of the healing and harmonizing force within his/her life.

### Procedures:

1. The Indian Health Service Staff has been instructed to inform patients they have the freedom to practice native religion when desired by the individual, member of their family in case of minors, or when the patient's condition is such that he/she can not make the request.
2. When an Indian Health Service patient (guardian-family member) request assistance in obtaining the services of a native practitioner, every effort will be made to comply. Such efforts might include contracting a native practitioner, providing space or privacy within a hospital room for a ceremony, and/or the authorization of contract health care funds to pay for native health consultation when necessary.
3. Each Area Office of the Indian Health Service has the responsibility to consult with the Native Americans within their respected area as to the desire of each tribe in relation to their religious beliefs concerning Autopsy and other Postmortem operations, disposition of dead body, disposal of a limb, disposal/burial of fetus, and comply in respect to the belief. Individual consent is required by the Indian Health Service before action on any of the above can be made.
4. Since a person's religious and native beliefs are often very personal, the patient's right to privacy must be respected in these matters. No Indian Health Service employee should be guilty of uninvited probing or interference in a patient's private beliefs. Many Indian patients prefer to say nothing about these native beliefs and practices. This is a right that must be respected.

5. Within this policy, Indian Health Service staff must continue to be aware of, sensitive to, and respectful of traditional beliefs and practices of the Native Americans. Procedures which would tend to interfere with, dilute, or modify these historic beliefs and practices must be avoided. Carefulness must be exercised so that Indian Health Service support, in whatever form it takes, does not become a wedge which creates dependency or wrests control from the chosen and honored native practitioners of ancient and effective healing practices. The goal is that there be respect and complimentary interface between the two systems of medicine and religion. Care must be taken that apparent Indian Health Service and federal beneficence does not become a means of destroying a system of healing which has both a long history and contemporary relevance.

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