



MAR 28 2011

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am writing to request your consultation regarding **sections 17 and 25 of the Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 (TLOA), Public Law 111-211**. These sections of the TLOA require the Indian Health Service (IHS) to consult with Tribal organizations and the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office on Violence Against Women, to develop standardized policies for addressing sexual assault that are consistent with DOJ policies.

There is a higher incidence of sexual assaults perpetrated against American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) than against any other racial or ethnic groups in the U.S. Thirty-nine percent of all AI/AN women will be raped at some point in their lives, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Devastating and pervasive, sexual assault significantly increases the victim's risk for developing depression, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder. These chronic conditions can lead to substance abuse, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and suicide. Sexual assault has serious medical and behavioral health consequences.

This Act is an important step toward ending violence against women and girls and making AI/AN communities safer and more secure by better coordinating responses to sexual assault in Indian Country. Now, more women will get the care they need to heal and better policies and protocols will aid the justice system in the prosecution of their perpetrators in the following ways:

- Standardizing the care for sexual assault survivors at IHS hospitals and clinics;
- Providing direct access to trained and certified sexual assault forensic examiners 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- Encouraging personnel to collect accurate evidence in a timely manner and to assist the patient, law enforcement, and prosecution in adjudicating criminal acts;
- Ensuring survivor needs are addressed, and;
- Supporting community efforts to participate in a sexual assault response team.

We are committed to meaningful consultation with Tribes and Tribal organizations in order to develop these standardized policies and procedures. Your suggestions for specific improvement are essential. I have enclosed our sexual assault policy for your review and comment. We will update this policy as needed after reviewing input from this consultation.

Please provide your input on the sexual assault policy and protocol by no later than **Monday, May 30, 2011**.

Comments may be submitted as follows:

- Send your comments by **E-MAIL to SAPolicyComments@ihs.gov**; or
- Send comments by postal mail to the following address:

Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H.
Director
Indian Health Service
801 Thompson Avenue, Suite 440
Rockville, MD 20852

We look forward to working with you throughout the implementation process.

Sincerely,

/Yvette Roubideaux/

Yvette Roubideaux, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

Enclosure