

Dear Tribal Leaders and Program Directors,

Here is a late-breaking notice of the VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations/Western Region Conference in Spokane, Washington April 10-12, 2012. It will be held at the Northern Quest Resort and Casino. The conference rate is \$87.00 per night. Hotel accommodations may be reserved by calling (877) 871-6772, press 4 for reservations.

Recent estimates tell us that there are more than 17,000 dual-eligible American Indian veterans residing in California; men and women who are both IHS eligible and VA eligible.

**This is a quarterly training conference on VA benefits** (enrollment/eligibility/billing overview, healthcare/treatment, housing/homelessness, employment/job training) **not a tribal consultation**. The target audience is tribal veterans and those who serve or care for them. On Wednesday, April 11, 2:00 - 3:30 PM, there will be a **90-minute Listening Session** with tribes and other attendees. There is no registration fee.

Please be advised that the preliminary conference agenda does not include any planned discussions on the IHCIA Section 405 policy issue of VA reimbursements to IHS and tribally contracted/compacted healthcare programs as high level discussions between the DHHS/IHS and the VA are still underway exploring the definitions of "purchasing" vs. "reimbursing". The agenda also does not include any planned discussions on the IHS/VA Memorandum of Agreement executed in October 2010 encouraging shared service arrangements at the local level between I/T/Us the VA.

I recommend that tribal and urban Indian healthcare program directors in California attend and send at least one benefits coordinator, senior patient registration clerk, and/or CHS assistant.

Margo Kerrigan  
Director  
IHS California Area Office