



APR 28 2005

Dear Tribal Leader:

I first informed you in December 2003 about the Indian Health Service (IHS) Area-wide special export of all Resource Patient Management System (RPMS), Patient Registration, and Patient Care Component data from October 1, 2000, to the present. These data will be used to build a new, state-of-the-art, enterprise-wide national data warehouse (NDW) developed by the IHS Office of Information Technology (OIT) to replace the older system that the National Patient Information Reporting System (NPIRS) has been using for many years. The NPIRS provides a broad range of clinical and administrative information to managers at all levels of the Indian health system to allow us to better manage our individual patients, local facilities, and regional and national programs as well as to produce required reports.

I would like to provide you an update on our progress. The initial export is proceeding well, and various localized issues are being resolved. We hope to begin ongoing incremental exports (the exporting of all modified or new data subsequent to the initial export) within the next month. As we offered last fall, NPIRS staff is ready to assist Tribal programs that use health information systems other than RPMS to export their data to the NDW. We plan to use the new NDW for producing the fiscal year 2005 Official Workload and User Population Reports next fall; that makes it critical that you provide us with your information. We are able to provide the following help:

- For those Tribes able to implement the industry-wide standard format for health care information (HL7) in their system, we have published a detailed "IHS NDW HL7 Data Transmission Guide" to assist you. It is readily available on the NDW Web page at [www.ndw.ihs.gov](http://www.ndw.ihs.gov). If we can provide you assistance in using this guide, please call the OIT HelpDesk at (888) 830-7280 (tol-free) or (505) 249-4371, if you are in Albuquerque, New Mexico, or the surrounding area. You can also send an e-mail to [support@ihs.gov](mailto:support@ihs.gov).
- We have posted the sets of codes that, if used correctly, will allow us to provide you with better information from your data (increased accuracy, a wider breadth of reports, etc.). This coding information is readily available on the NDW Web page listed above. If we can provide you with assistance in using these codes, please contact us, as described above.
- For those Tribes that cannot yet implement the industry-wide standard (HL7), we will provide you with information to assist you in sending your information in a simpler format - one that we can still understand and load into the NDW. Please contact us, as described above.

In review, the NDW project and its anticipated benefits have been widely discussed throughout the Indian health system at meetings with the Information System Advisory Council, Executive Leadership Group, Indian Health Leadership Council, and Combined National Councils as well as at Tribal consultation meetings. The NDW project has incorporated various recommendations from these leadership groups resulting in a new data warehouse for improving quality data. The NDW project will yield many data quality and reporting improvements, which include:

- eliminating much of the duplicate counting of patients in our reports (because the same patient is registered at several facilities) and improving the accuracy of user population reports;
- adding data items to the NDW, such as medications and lab test results, to better report patient outcomes;
- ensuring the data in the NDW more closely matches the data at local sites so reports can be more readily verifiable;
- assisting those at local sites and in Area Offices to track and monitor locally exported data for NDW purposes;
- providing a more complete set of data to support your Area's performance measurement activities, health status, surveillance, and epidemiology needs; and
- providing the Agency with a single source of "true data" by using one rigorously gathered, verified, and maintained data source.

We all recognize the increased need for timely, accurate, and complete data to support the IHS mission to elevate the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level. I am confident the NDW project will improve the Agency's reporting needs.

Thank you for your support during this important project.

Sincerely yours,

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

cc: Tribal Health Director