AUG 16 2010

Dear Tribal Leader:

As part of ongoing Indian Health Service (IHS) efforts to renew and strengthen our partnership with Tribes, I would like to update you on Agency actions related to Health Information Technology (HIT). These activities are also in compliance with the November 5, 2009, "Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation to the Heads of the Executive Departments and Agencies," which directs agencies to develop plans for improving the Tribal consultation process.

On December 17, 2008, during a national information technology (IT) Tribal consultation session in Phoenix, Arizona, the IHS Office of Information Technology (OIT) presented a detailed proposal recommending a change in the way Tribes access funds and services related to HIT support packages. The consultation session generated numerous discussions among participants that resulted in several follow-up letters received from concerned Tribal Leaders and their representatives.

In response to feedback from the consultation session, then IHS Director, Mr. Robert McSwain, recommended an IHS/Tribal/Urban (I/T/U) IT Tribal Shares Workgroup be formed, which would be charged with the following: reviewing current OIT Tribal shares in light of comments received from the Tribal Consultation report logs; providing advice and guidance to Regions/Areas on how to improve the consultation process; and, developing OIT support packages that are consistent with the IHS vision statement. This workgroup membership included health care program representatives from the I/T/U and was organized to work in conjunction with the Information Systems Advisory Committee (ISAC). Following a series of workgroup meetings, the IT Tribal Shares Workgroup submitted their final comments for consideration by both the ISAC and me on September 30, 2009. Several important observations and recommendations were generated from the workgroup's findings and I have included a copy of the report for your review.

Technology is at the forefront of health reform and critical to improve health outcomes in our communities; as a result, the demands on OIT and local staff have never been greater. Technology is also rapidly changing, especially with the current push to meet "meaningful use of HIT" requirements. A number of Tribes/Tribal Organizations have chosen to purchase alternative commercial solutions to meet their organizational IT requirements. The application of historical Tribal shares are less reflective of current day programs, services, functions, and activities (PSFAs) provided by the OIT. There is a perceived lack of transparency in costs assigned to OIT PSFAs and related Tribal shares. The workgroup determined that there is a need for a defined service catalogue, to the extent possible, outlining services and buy back rates that will ensure stability in the OIT's ability to appropriately support I/T/U programs. The OIT must

have flexibility to respond to the range of demands influenced by the size, complexity, priorities, and local or in house resources of each I/T/U program. Change is needed to foster Self-Governance and to ensure that the OIT and I/T/U programs maintain a mutually viable support model.

The following recommendations highlight issues that will potentially have the greatest impact on your health program during the coming year. These and additional recommendations are further defined in the attached recommendations from the IT Tribal Shares Workgroup:

1. Initiate an appropriate Tribal consultation process prior to submitting any future OIT proposal that affects OIT Tribal share distribution.
2. Re-evaluate and update the description of OIT PSFAs
3. Develop a consolidated budget line for OIT support services to help accurately identify costs and create transparency in the budgeting process.

I have directed my staff to work with the ISAC to further develop proposals for IT Tribal shares and submit a plan that will address the concerns and needs of I/T/U programs, as follows:

- The OIT, in coordination with Area Directors, will host Area-based listening sessions to gather input from I/T/U programs.
- The ISAC committee will review the information gathered from the listening sessions with OIT staff to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the issues no later than September 30, 2011.
- I will review the draft plan and coordinate a Tribal consultation meeting.
- The draft will be distributed to Tribal leaders in advance and will include an opportunity to respond in writing prior to the Tribal consultation meeting.
- Following Tribal consultation, the plan will be finalized and all necessary changes will be made to ensure a smooth transition prior to the start of the fiscal year 2013 negotiations cycle.

Through this letter, I extend two invitations to you and designated staff. First, I invite you to submit comments about the workgroup recommendations specifically to the OIT for inclusion in the development of IT Tribal share discussion papers for the national meeting. Your input is essential in ensuring the upcoming IHS Tribal consultation process will be effective and the proposals will be considerate of your needs. Please provide your input within the next 45-days. Second, I invite you and designated staff to attend one of the Area-based listening sessions and the national meeting. Information regarding the listening sessions and national meeting will be forthcoming.

Please **mail or e-mail** your written list of issues and concerns to **both** of the following contacts:

Theresa Cullen, M.D., M.S.
Chief Information Officer
Indian Health Service
801 Thompson Ave, TMP 300
Rockville, MD 20852
e-mail: theresa.cullen@ihs.gov

Mr. Raymond Willie
Acting Tribal Liaison
Indian Health Service
5300 Homestead Road NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110
e-mail: raymond.willie@ihs.gov

Thank you for your interest in this issue and your ongoing support as we move forward in further developing the services available through the OIT.

Sincerely,

/Yvette Roubideaux/

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

Enclosure: Recommendations from the I/T/U IT Tribal Shares Workgroup