



**Remarks for RADM Michael Toedt
IHS Media Call – COVID-19
March 17, 2020 | 3:00 p.m. EDT**

Thank you all for joining us for this conversation about the IHS response to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. The Indian Health Service and our partners across the Department of Health and Human Services are coordinating a comprehensive public health response for the agency.

Across the IHS, we remain strongly committed to working with our tribal and urban Indian organization partners. We have been holding weekly phone calls with these partners to hear their concerns, listen to their input and to provide updates.

The IHS is also in close communication with the White House and other federal agencies to ensure comprehensive communication is shared with Indian Country. The White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs is coordinating the Indian Country COVID-19 Response Team in unison with the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure there is a united front across federal agencies with jurisdiction in Indian Country.

The Indian Country COVID-19 Response Team will be a part of the President's Coronavirus Task Force. The response team includes various organizations across the federal government including the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, HHS, FEMA, Department of Interior, VA, the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention, and the Indian Health Service. On Wednesday, March 18, at 2:00 PM eastern time, the White House Indian Country COVID-19 Response Team will host a nationwide, all-tribes conference call to support tribal leadership in driving readiness to prepare for and respond to COVID-19 in Indian Country.

IHS facilities are capable of testing patients for COVID-19. Clinicians are following CDC guidelines and work in coordination with state public health officials to determine who should be tested. Where patients test positive, IHS is working closely with the state and/or tribes to identify anyone else in the community who has been in close contact with the patient and may need to be tested

We are pushing supplies out from the IHS National Supply Service Center to regional centers and on to IHS, tribal, and urban facilities as quickly as possible.

Some of our service units are leading the way in implementing efforts to reduce the risk of transmission and increase efficiency of limited staffing, such as at the Gallup Indian Medical Center in New Mexico, where they have implemented a drive-up testing location and are using telehealth by replacing office visits such as for prescription refills with phone calls for some patients.

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. More cases of COVID-19 are likely to be identified in the coming days. The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is very high.

While any direct impacts of this outbreak to Indian Country are not yet known, we must be vigilant in our efforts to prevent the spread of infections among our patients and within the communities we serve. We can confirm that three IHS

patients have tested presumptive positive. One in the IHS Portland Area, one in the IHS Great Plains Area, and one in the Navajo Area.

One of the partner agencies we are working closely with is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I want to say thank you to Dr. Jay Butler, the deputy director for infectious diseases at the CDC, for joining our media call today to answer your questions. I will now hand it over to Dr. Butler.