

# COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

## ISSUE

The future of Indian health care requires coordinated intervention of health care services, educational systems, and economic development programs. Critical to this effort are collaborations and partnerships among tribal nations, urban Indian health organizations, academic medical centers, foundations, businesses, professional organizations, and federal agencies and programs.

## BACKGROUND

The IHS alone cannot improve the health status of Indian people without mutually beneficial partnerships. The time of improving health with just medical interventions is gone. The belief that improvements in health services alone will mean improvements in educational achievement, employment opportunities, and economic development is not reasonable. Improvements must take place in each arena to make a difference in the lives of American Indian and Alaska Native people.

Just as the underlying premise that responsibility for health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives has shifted to include all Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies and programs, there needs to be further recognition that there is a shared responsibility for improving health with other Federal agencies and programs that impact on the entire quality of life issues.

In recent years, the IHS has moved from a position of control and direction to one of partnership and consultation with the communities it serves. The IHS has established a working partnership with members of the local health team and local communities, those most knowledgeable of the daily challenges of Indian health care, as well as with tribal governments and organizations to contribute to the decision-making process. The solidifying and strengthening of these partnerships represent one of the IHS's greatest management achievements over the last few years. These achievements in the health arena can be expanded through similar efforts in the academic and business arenas.

## SITUATION

Collaborations have been established with the Health Care Financing Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Social Security Administration, and the National Institutes of Health, and potential collaborations are under development with the Health Resources and Services Administration and other HHS agencies. Collaboration with non-HHS agencies such as the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Interior, Justice, Transportation, Education, Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Protection Agency have been established to look at ways to complement health programs and to examine how improvements in education, law enforcement, business practices, and employment can also have positive effects on health status.

## OPTIONS/PLANS

The continued success of collaborations is dependent upon the embracing of the principle that responsibility for the provision of health care for Indian people is a shared responsibility with all of HHS, with IHS serving as the lead agency for advocating and assisting other Operating Divisions in this activity.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For referral to the appropriate spokesperson, contact the IHS Public Affairs Staff at 301-443-3593.

