

USET SPF Alert: IHS Announcement on the National Expansion of CHAP July 14, 2020

**Dear USET Health Directors and Health Committee,**

On July 2, 2020 the Indian Health Service (IHS) [announced](#) the national expansion of the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP). Nationalization of CHAP will expand access of the program for all Tribal Nations to train mid-level Tribal community health providers and increase access to quality, culturally-competent healthcare. Provider types include community health aides, behavioral health aides, and dental health aide therapists. IHS says it intends for CHAP to be flexible as implementation proceeds, so that resources can be tailored to each community served.

According to IHS, the agency will use a phased implementation approach, starting with Tribal consultation on the allocation of \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2020 funding ~~from~~ to support key components. These components include:

- Establishing certification boards at the IHS Area and national levels to begin certifying providers in the lower 48;
- Increasing community education on the role of CHAP across Indian Country;
- Investing into training within Tribal communities; and
- Providing additional support to Tribally-operated programs.

Last year, USET SPF provided [comment](#) to IHS regarding the agency's request for input on the draft policy to "implement, outline, and define a National [CHAP]" outside of Alaska as authorized under amendments to the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCA). In our comments, we expressed our continued support for the expansion of CHAP with maximum flexibility for Tribal Nations while underscoring that nationalization must not come at the expense of other vital IHS services. USET SPF will continue to monitor IHS' consultation plans on the \$5 million in funding and will keep our membership updated.

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