



USET

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USET Resolution No. 2026:004

STRENGTHENING TRIBAL DATA SOVEREIGNTY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL DATA SHARING TO ADVANCE TRIBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

- WHEREAS,** the United South and Eastern Tribes, Incorporated (USET) is an intertribal organization comprised of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations dedicated to strengthening the health, sovereignty, and well-being of Tribal citizens across the United States; and
- WHEREAS,** the actions taken by the USET Board of Directors officially represent the intentions of each member Tribal Nation, as the Board of Directors comprises delegates from the member Tribal Nations' leadership; and
- WHEREAS,** the USET Tribal Epidemiology Center (TEC), established in 2000, was created to support USET member Tribal Nations through epidemiologic surveillance, data analysis, technical assistance, and public health research; and
- WHEREAS,** Section 214 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) authorizes TECs as public health authorities under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), granting them the right to collect, access, and utilize data to carry out essential public health functions on behalf of Tribal Nations; and
- WHEREAS,** despite this federal designation, TECs continue to face challenges in obtaining timely access to critical health data from federal, state, and local partners due to administrative barriers, inconsistent data-sharing policies, and a lack of awareness of TECs' legal authority; and
- WHEREAS,** data sets pertaining to Tribal citizens and communities are a sovereign resource of Tribal Nations, and the principles of Tribal data sovereignty affirm that Tribal governments have the inherent right to govern the collection, ownership, application, and confidentiality of their data; and
- WHEREAS,** states and the federal government often collect or otherwise have access to health data sets that contain health data about Tribal citizens and communities; and
- WHEREAS,** equitable public health surveillance and data access are essential to ensure that Tribal Nations can monitor disease trends, identify emerging threats, and develop culturally informed prevention and response strategies; and
- WHEREAS,** the federal government, states, and Tribal Nations as well as their citizens and communities all benefit when health data is shared across relevant epidemiology centers and public health entities; and

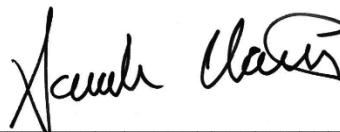
- WHEREAS,** establishing and negotiating Data Use Agreements (DUAs) between the USET TEC and state and/or federal health agencies is a best practice that formalizes access to vital statistics, reportable disease, syndromic surveillance, and other public health data while upholding Tribal data governance principles; and
- WHEREAS,** USET TEC has already established a practice of gathering public health data from data sources for the betterment of our Tribal Nations, and DUAs will represent a continuation and formalization of this practice; and
- WHEREAS,** these DUAs will further USET TEC's role in modernizing data systems, expanding data visualization and analytic capacity, and strengthening the overall Tribal public health infrastructure across the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Regions I–VI; and
- WHEREAS,** USET honors its Tribal Nations' data sovereignty through its commitment to maintain the confidentiality of and not disclose any Tribal Nation-specific data provided to USET unless USET determines in consultation with the Tribal Nation that disclosure is mandated by law or required by an overseeing government agency, the Tribal Nation has provided written permission for disclosure, or the data is available to the public; and
- WHEREAS,** the USET TEC is committed to ensuring that all data sharing and use complies with this commitment, recognizing the inherent rights of Tribal Nations to maintain, control, protect, and develop their own data and information resources; and
- WHEREAS,** in December 2010, the United States recognized the rights of its First Peoples through its support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), whose provisions and principles support and promote the purposes of this resolution; therefore, be it
- RESOLVED** that the USET Board of Directors is in full support of USET pursuing DUAs with each state with which a USET Tribal Nation member shares geography and with the federal government to access health data on behalf of USET Tribal Nation members.

CERTIFICATION

This resolution was duly passed at the USET Annual Meeting at which a quorum was present on November 4, 2025.



Chief Kirk E. Francis, Sr., President
United South and Eastern Tribes



Vice Chairwoman Sarah Harris, Secretary
United South and Eastern Tribes

Because there is Strength in Unity