



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

May 22, 2012

Dear Tribal Leader:

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) invites you to participate in three upcoming tribal consultation sessions on the Affordable Care Act. HHS is interested in your input on two topics: the Exchange Blueprint guidance released on May 16, 2012, on the federally-facilitated Exchange (FFE) that will be established under the Affordable Care Act and an education session on Medicaid expansion. HHS is working hard to implement policies that will improve the quality and accessibility of health services for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people and we welcome your input on this important component of the Affordable Care Act.

We have also continued to release guidance and information to states on Affordable Insurance Exchanges (Exchanges), Essential Health Benefits, expanded Medicaid eligibility, and much more. These new policies have been shaped with substantial input from states and tribes, and HHS appreciates your willingness to work with us to continually improve our health care system.

Consultation Sessions

Tribal consultation sessions will be held in three cities to allow you to select the most convenient consultation to attend. If possible, we ask that you preregister so we can ensure enough materials are available at each site. You can preregister by sending an email to consultation@hhs.gov. The dates and locations are listed below:

JULY 26, 2012

Washington, DC

9:30 AM – 4:30 PM

HHH Building: Room 800
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

AUGUST 7, 2012

Anchorage, AK

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Location: TBA

AUGUST 9, 2012

Denver, CO

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Location: TBA
In Conjunction with the
Indian Health Service Tribal
Consultation Summit

Exchanges

Consistent with the belief that individual states best understand their own health insurance markets and the direction from the Affordable Care Act that states be the primary establishers of Exchanges, the Administration is taking steps to assist and enable states to establish their own Affordable Insurance Exchanges.

Exchanges are state-specific marketplaces that will allow individuals and small businesses access to qualified health plans. We have released helpful resources to assist states in this process and ensure that you and your community are informed. First, we are releasing the Exchange Blueprint, which outlines the materials to apply for certification of a state-based Exchange or

approval for a state to participate in a Partnership Exchange. The Blueprint can be found at <http://cciio.cms.gov/resources/files/Exchangeblueprint05162012.pdf>. The Blueprint is due no later than November 16, 2012, which is 30 business days before the Exchange certification deadline of January 1, 2013. We also awarded six more Exchange Establishment Grants, bringing the total awardees to 34 states plus the District of Columbia. These grants assist states in developing strategies, systems, and human resources to implement Exchanges that fit the unique needs of each state. As a condition of accepting federal Exchange Establishment Grant funding, state governments are required to consult with Indian Tribes in their state regarding the establishment of a state-based Exchange.

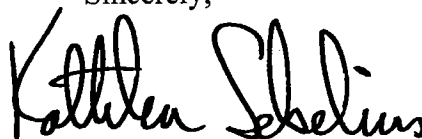
At the same time, some states will need additional time before they are ready to run their own Exchange. In those states, HHS will operate a Partnership Exchange or federally-facilitated Exchange to ensure that all Americans in all states will be able to purchase insurance through an Exchange. The Department has recently released guidance, found at http://cciio.cms.gov/resources/files/FFE_Guidance_FINAL_VERSION_051612.pdf, in which we outline a high-level vision of the business processes and operational approach we plan for each federally-facilitated Exchange. The guidance also contains information on state responsibilities in the context of the Partnership models, where the state supports and operates some Exchange functions on behalf of the federally-facilitated Exchange. We encourage states not operating their own Exchange to participate in a Partnership Exchange. We believe that this range of options provides maximum flexibility for states, while ensuring access to quality, affordable coverage for all Americans.

Medicaid Expansion

In 2014, many AI/ANs are expected to be eligible for the Medicaid program's expansion to include all individuals up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (about \$31,000 for a family of four or \$39,000 in Alaska) including a 5 percent disregard. Because of the potential impact on health insurance coverage in Indian Country, the consultation sessions will also include a general overview and an educational session on the Medicaid expansion final rule.

Your participation in this consultation process is vital to forming effective health and human services policy under the Affordable Care Act. I look forward to receiving your advice and input during these sessions and to continuing to work together to improve the health of the tribal communities. For more information, please contact Stacey Ecoffey, Principal Advisor for Tribal Affairs, HHS Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, at (202) 690-6060 or by e-mail at stacey.ecoffey@hhs.gov.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Sebelius