



American Indian Health Commission for Washington State

“Improving Indian Health through Tribal-State Collaboration”

April 30, 2014

Richard Onizuka, Chief Executive Officer
Washington Health Benefits Exchange
810 Jefferson Street, SE
Olympia WA, 98501

RE: Request for Meeting with Tribal Advisory Workgroup

Dear Mr. Onizuka:

The American Indian Health Commission (AIHC), on behalf of the Washington Health Benefit Exchange Tribal Advisory Workgroup (TAW), would like to thank you for acknowledging our concerns in your letter dated, February 7, 2014. The WHBE Tribal Advisory Workgroup met on March 20, 2014 to determine next steps in response to your letter. The TAW would like to invite you to the next regularly scheduled TAW meeting on May 15, 2014 at 2 p.m. to discuss solutions to increasing American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) enrollment. The issues are outlined below.

A current obstacle to enrollment concerns the inability for families who have both enrolled AI/AN and non-Indians to obtain coverage on Washington Healthplanfinder in a way that maximizes their cost saving benefits. The onerous process of splitting applications among these families has resulted in two scenarios: (1) families with incomplete applications that Washington Healthplanfinder cannot process due to technical issues; or (2) only part of the family can obtain coverage and the remainder of the family remains “stuck” in the application process. Also, the split application contains a tax credit discrepancy in which the family member applying for coverage with children in the household receives a higher tax credit than the other family member who is applying for one individual adult. A current example of this scenario is one tribal family with the father and three sons, each enrolled members of a Tribe, receives a tax credit of \$876 per month for all four family members making their premium \$104.25 per month. The non-Native member has a monthly tax credit of \$74 and a monthly premium of \$280.28 for just her.

Also, as we have addressed in our letter dated, March 5, 2014, AI/AN and tribal assisters need further clarity as to whether the AI/AN income exemptions that apply for Medicaid Expansion will be the same for the AI/AN eligible for cost sharing benefits available through enrollment in qualified health plans. We have also requested adoption of the AIHC Income Guidance Document to be posted on the WHBE website. The TAW and AIHC believe that providing further clarification and simplicity to the AI/AN income exemption rules is critical to easing the hesitancy many AI/AN have regarding enrolling in a system that does not clearly explain their treaty exempt income.

As for the issue of verification, we thank you for your clarification that a tribal assister can manually verify AI/AN status. It is also our understanding that no further action is required by

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the WHBE in verifying AI/AN status, and that while the tribal liaison is currently entering those verification, this process is a technical "glitch" that will soon be repaired. We would appreciate an update to the verification process, particularly whether this issues has been resolved. In addition, we would appreciate a copy of the AI/AN verification policy and procedure including the Good Faith Exemption Form and a copy of the notice letter that is sent to AI/AN who WHBE has determined have insufficient documentation for verification of tribal enrollment.

Finally, the TAW would like to further discuss the role of the tribal liaison as it relates to resolution of important AI/AN policy issues. We want to ensure that there are enough resources, time, and access for the tribal liaison to effectively resolve important policy matters concerning AI/AN enrollment and WHBE consultation.

We look forward to the opportunity to meet with you in May to discuss these issues. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Vicki Lowe, AIHC Project Manager, at (360) 582-4871.

Sincerely,



Steve Kutz, Chair
American Indian Health Commission of Washington State

Attachments

cc:

Tribal Leaders
AIHC Delegates
Brent Simcosky, AIHC Executive Interim Director
Sheryl Lowe, WHBE Tribal Liaison
Michael Marchand, HBE Communications Director
Molly Voris, WHBE Policy Director
Pam MacEwan, WHBE Chief of Staff
Joe Finkbonner, NPAIHB Executive Director
Jim Roberts, NPAIHB Policy Analyst
Peggy Ollgaard, Portland Area Indian Health Service Business Manager