



Indian Health Service Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Critical Care Response Team Will Further Enhance Patient Care Across the Indian Health Service

Today, the Indian Health Service is announcing that it is forming a Critical Care Response Team of expert physicians, registered nurses, and other healthcare professionals on an as needed basis to provide urgent lifesaving medical care to COVID-19 patients admitted to IHS or tribal hospitals.

These expert medical professionals will conduct hands-on clinical education while treating patients, expanding capacity and training the frontline health care professionals on the most current information for the management of COVID-19 patients, and other critically ill patients. In the event a hospital or other medical location needs additional resources, the critical care response team can be mobilized and at the bedside of the patient within 24-48 hours notice.

“A critical care response team will further enhance patient care across the Indian health system,” said IHS Director Rear Adm. Michael D. Weahkee. “This is a positive step in providing access to quality critical health care services, strengthening organizational capacity, improving operations and giving additional support to our frontline health care workers. Additional expert critical care support will assist IHS hospitals during a crisis and provide our most vulnerable patients the greatest chance of survival.”

The IHS is responding to COVID-19 with an all hands on deck approach to address the potential surge in hospitalized and critically ill patients. For instance, the IHS is working to rapidly deploy telehealth services as needed to allow critical care consultation for patients managed in an IHS intensive care unit, and for critically ill patients receiving care at hospitals before they transfer to a higher level of care. The IHS also continues to work with tribal, state and local partners to operate alternate care sites using existing buildings for patients who have been transferred from the hospital but still require some level of medical care. These patients may require oxygen and medications but do not require extensive nursing care or assistance with activities of daily living.

The IHS received over \$2.4 billion in new funding to provide resources that will support a wide range of COVID-19 response activities across the Indian health system. The critical care response team will be staffed through a 12-month contract awarded to Fire Creek Services Company, a Native-owned small business, which is part of All Native Group.

The IHS, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](https://www.hhs.gov/) provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](https://www.ihs.gov/) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ihs/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ihs/) and [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ihs/).

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