

ANHB UPDATE



August 28, 2026

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STATE UPDATES



DOH Releases Over \$180 Million in Rural Health Transformation Program Awards

The Alaska Department of Health (DOH) has now issued Notices of Intent to Award for a total of over \$180 million of Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Year One funding. DOH has issued four sets of award announcements to date, with announcements released each Friday. The awards announced to date cover 185 projects across the state, including projects proposed by 15 different ANHB members. A list of all projects awarded funding is available [here](#). DOH will continue to release funding announcements weekly on Fridays as decisions are finalized.

Upcoming Rural Health Transformation Program Workgroup Meeting

The Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Workgroup has scheduled an upcoming meeting with the Department of Health (DOH) to reflect on the Year One funding process and share thoughts and recommendations on Year Two funding strategies. This meeting will take place on Friday, September 4 at 10:00 am. Please reach out to us at anhb@anhb.org for the meeting information if you would like to participate.

DPA Provides Demo on New Application for Benefits to Tribal Assisters

On August 17, the Alaska Department of Health, Division of Public Assistance (DPA) provided a walk-through of its new application for benefits – including Medicaid, SNAP, and other public assistance programs – to Tribal health staff who assist patients with their applications. The new application is a single, mobile-friendly form that Alaskans can use to apply for multiple benefits at once. The form is available through the [Alaska Connect Portal](#). ANHB continues to engage with DOH to ensure that the modernized form will mesh with Tribal assisters' ability to help patients with their applications.

HCS Announces Upcoming Change to Medicaid Travel Broker

The Alaska Department of Health, Division of Health Care Services (HCS) has announced that it plans to transition its Medicaid travel broker contract. The new contractor will be Travel Services, Inc, which will oversee Medicaid air and ferry transportation. This change will go into effect on October 16, 2026. HCS will be putting out more information in the coming months through the [HCS Connect email list](#).

DOH and ANTHC Release Revised Healthy Alaskans 2030 State Health Assessment

On August 21, the Alaska Department of Health (DOH) and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) announced the release of

2026 Meeting Dates

August 31, 2026

IHS National Tribal Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Behavioral Health

September 2-3, 2026

IHS CSC Advisory Group Meeting
Washington, DC

September 9-10, 2026

CDC/ATSDR Tribal Advisory Committee
Tucson, AZ

September 22, 2026

RHTP Regional Planning Meeting
Anchorage, AK

September 22-24, 2026

HHS STAC Meeting
San Diego, CA

October 29, 2026

Medicaid Task Force
Anchorage, AK

November 2, 2026

IHS National Tribal Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Behavioral Health Virtual

November 18-20, 2026

ANTHC Board of Directors Meeting
Anchorage, AK

December 2, 2026

ANTHC Annual Meeting
Anchorage, AK

the [revised Healthy Alaskans 2030 State Health Assessment](#), a collaborative effort that identifies Alaska's most pressing health needs for the decade 2020-2030. The assessment serves as the foundation for the [2030 State Health Improvement Plan](#), which tracks progress toward meeting those needs. The 2026 update includes some bad news, especially relating to obesity, childhood vaccination rates, and life expectancy. There is also some good news, including increased access to prenatal care, higher high school graduation rates, and decreased exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke. Alaska's state health improvement plan is the only one in the country led by a state-Tribal partnership.

DOH to Host ASAM Provider Focus Group

The Alaska Department of Health (DOH) has begun exploring the transition from the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria, Third Edition, to the Fourth Edition for both youth and adults. As part of this effort, DOH is seeking input from Medicaid-enrolled behavioral health providers to better understand opportunities, challenges, operational needs, and provider readiness considerations. DOH plans to host a series of focused discussions that will help inform their planning efforts. Two virtual focus group sessions of approximately 60/90 minutes each are planned, with the first session occurring during the week of August 31, 2026, and a follow-up session the week of September 7, 2026.

If your organization is interested, provide the name, title/role, agency, email, and phone number for the individual(s) who will be participating via email to doh.dbh.communications@alaska.gov and cc Jenny Nate Cornelia jenny.natecornelia@guidehouse.com and Maria Olifer molifer@guidehouse.com.

FEDERAL UPDATES



Mark Cruz Takes Office as 12th IHS Director

On Friday, August 21, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced Mr. Mark Cruz' formal assumption of office as Indian Health Service (IHS) Director. Director Cruz was previously confirmed by the Senate on August 7. He will continue in his role as Senior Advisor to Secretary Kennedy while assuming the role of IHS Director. Director Cruz is a citizen of the Klamath Tribes and brings extensive experience in Tribal and federal policy. Before his current role at HHS, he previously served at the U.S. Department of the Interior during the Trump administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs for Policy and Economic Development (DAS-PED), and he also has experience on Capitol Hill. On August 24, Mr. Cruz issued a [Dear Tribal Leader Letter \(DTLL\)](#) regarding his assumption of office, his priorities as Director, and his commitment to working alongside Tribal Nations.

December 8-9, 2026

HHS STAC Meeting
Washington, DC

December 8-10, 2026

ANHB Annual
Meeting & IHS
Budget Formulation
Anchorage, AK

2027 Meeting Dates

March 23-24, 2027

ATHC Pre-
Negotiations
Anchorage, AK

May 10-14, 2027

ATHC Final
Negotiations
Anchorage, AK

IHS August 25, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter

On August 25, 2026, the Indian Health Service (IHS) issued a Dear Tribal Leader Letter announcing that the Office of Human Resources Division of Commissioned Personnel Support has created a new opportunity to advertise open positions at Tribal and Urban Indian health care facilities through the U.S. Public Health Service's (USPHS) Commissioned Corps vacancy announcement process. If you would like to have your position advertised through this process, please contact us at IHSCorpsRecruitment@ihs.gov for additional information. [View the full Dear Tribal Leader Letter here.](#)

Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs to Host Consultations on Section 105(l) Facility Leasing

The Department of the Interior, Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs (AS-IA), in collaboration with the Office of Facilities, Property and Safety Management (OFPSM) and the Office of Tribal Leases (OTL), will host two virtual Consultation Sessions regarding recent proposed updates to the 105(l) facility lease process. The sessions are scheduled for September 8 at 1:00 PM Eastern Time and September 10 at 2:00 PM Eastern Time. More information can be found in the [Dear Tribal Leader Letter](#) issued by the AS-IA.

IHS Announces \$15.3 Million Investment in Staff Quarters Projects

The Indian Health Service (IHS) has announced that it will dedicate \$15.3 million in funding, through the Healthcare Facilities Construction Funds Quarters Program, to eight staff quarters projects to support the health care workforce and facilities in Indian Country. IHS previously conducted a request for project proposals in January and received 22 applications from six IHS Areas. The top eight were then selected based on their clear and demonstrated housing needs, remoteness, cost, readiness for implementation, and the ability to support essential staffing. The projects selected for funding include one from the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC). [See more details here.](#)

HRSA Publishes Revised Plan for 340B Rebate Model Pilot Program

On August 3, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) published a [revised 340B Rebate Model Pilot Program via the Federal Register](#). Under the proposal, participating manufacturers would provide rebates to covered entities after the purchase of certain eligible drugs, rather than offering the discounted price at the point of sale. HRSA originally announced a 340B Rebate Model Pilot Program in July 2025, but withdrew the proposal after it was challenged in federal court. In February 2026, the agency issued a Request for Information seeking stakeholder feedback on the potential use of rebates to effectuate 340B ceiling prices. The Tribal Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) [submitted comments](#) urging HRSA to exempt Indian Health Providers from any rebate model due to the unique

federal trust responsibility and operational impacts on Tribal health programs – a position that ANHB supports. The revised pilot retains the core structure of the 2025 proposal while adding some operational safeguards and reporting requirements. ANHB will continue to monitor this proposal.

OTHER UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS



ANHB Approves Resolutions on Self-Governance Expansion and Sovereign Immunity

On August 19, 2026, the ANHB Board of Directors approved two new resolutions. [Resolution No. 01-2026](#) supports expanding Self-Governance in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to agencies beyond the Indian Health Service (IHS), a long-standing Congressional priority for ANHB and its members. [Resolution No. 02-2026](#) implores the State of Alaska to end its practice of requiring Tribal Waivers of Sovereign Immunity as a condition for receiving grant funds, including for program funds passed through the State of Alaska to beneficiary Tribes. A similar resolution was passed by the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) in 2022.

ANTHC Hiring Behavioral Health Wellness Clinic Director

ANTHC's Behavioral Health Wellness Clinic is hiring a Director to lead the fully telehealth clinic serving Alaska Native communities across the state. This is a role that blends leadership with hands-on care. ANTHC shares that this is an incredible opportunity to join a compassionate, hard-working team that values humor, community, and a shared commitment to Tribal behavioral health. The team's dedication shows in the results — 84% of clients demonstrated improvement last quarter. If you know someone who is ready to lead an innovative, culturally responsive care model while still doing direct clinical work, please share this opportunity with them. Learn more and apply for the position [here](#).

ANHB Workgroups

ANHB encourages participation in its workgroups. Please see below a list of current ANHB workgroups. If you would like yourself or someone from your team added to any of these workgroups, please let us know by emailing anhb@anhb.org. If you have questions about workgroup focus or time commitment, please reach out to us as well.

- **Medicaid Task Force (MTF):** Convenes in May and October with the Alaska Department of Health (DOH) to address Medicaid issues and the Medicaid Open Items list.
- **Medicaid Eligibility Workgroup:** Monthly workgroup with the Alaska Department of Health to address the Medicaid application backlog, Division of Public Assistance (DPA) modernization, and related areas of concern.

- **Medicaid Travel Policy Workgroup:** Quarterly or ad-hoc workgroup with the Alaska Department of Health focused on Medicaid travel issues at the policy level.
- **Tribal CFO Workgroup:** Monthly or quarterly workgroup of Tribal CFOs and policy analysts regarding common issues including Appendix A.
- **Legislative Committee:** Develops ANHB's State and Federal policy priorities annually in fall and winter. Meets weekly during State Legislative Session to formulate ANHB advocacy strategies and build consensus on state and federal engagement.
- **Rural Health Transformation Program Workgroup:** Ad-hoc Tribal workgroup focused on shared concerns around the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP).
- **Village Built Clinic Workgroup:** Ad-hoc workgroup with the Indian Health Service (IHS) on funding for Village Built Clinics (VBCs).
- **HR 1 Workgroup:** Bi-weekly workgroup to share knowledge and build consensus around Tribal priorities related to the implementation of H.R. 1 and engage with the Alaska Department of Health.
- **Traditional Healing Workgroup:** Joint workgroup with the Alaska Department of Health on amendment of Alaska's 1115 waiver to allow for Traditional Healing services.

The Voice of Alaska Tribal Health Since 1968

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