

ANHB UPDATE



October 9, 2026

Inside this issue:

- Announcement: ANHB to Host IHS Tribal Delegation Meeting with Director Cruz on October 22, 2026

State Updates

- DOH Initiates Tribal Consultation and Public Comment on Traditional Healing Waiver Application
- DOH Initiates Tribal Consultation on School Based Services SPA
- RHTP Updates: Year Two Fall 2026 Application Window Opens, Public Comment Opportunity, & Year One Funding Allocation Status
- Notice of Proposed Changes: Behavioral Health 1115 Waiver Services Rates for Subacute Stabilization and Residential Services
- MAT Conference Scheduled for October 13-15, 2026

Federal Updates

- CMS Approves Traditional Healing 1115 Demonstration Waivers in Utah and Maine
- Public Comment Opportunity: U.S. Census Bureau Tribal Consultation
- IHS October 6, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter
- GAO Issues Report on Tribal Water Infrastructure
- Abstract Submissions Open for the 2027 Public Health Preparedness Summit
- IHS Initiates Tribal Consultation on Loan Repayment Program
- IHS to Hold Listening Session on Health Care Facilities Construction Priority System

Other Updates & Announcements

- ANHB Welcomes Native Village of Chitina as Newest ANHB Member
- Funding Opportunity: ANTHC Behavioral Health Youth & Family Prevention Subaward RFP
- BBAHC President/CEO Robert J. Clark Announces Retirement
- ANTHC Announces Transfer of Ownership of ANMC
- ANHB Workgroups
- Upcoming Events

Announcement: ANHB to Host IHS Tribal Delegation Meeting with Director Cruz on October 22, 2026

ANHB will host a Tribal Delegation Meeting on **October 22, 2026, from 10:30-11:30 AM**, with Indian Health Service (IHS) Director Mark Cruz. There will be a Tribal caucus meeting from 9:00-10:00 AM on October 22 to prepare for the TDM. The meeting will take place at 4000 Ambassador Drive (ANTHC Consortium Office Building), Conference Rooms 1&2, in Anchorage, and via Zoom. [Join the Zoom meeting on October 22 using this link](#). Please contact us at anhb@anhb.org with any questions.

STATE UPDATES



DOH Initiates Tribal Consultation and Public Comment on Traditional Healing Waiver Application

On October 5, the Alaska Department of Health (DOH) [initiated Tribal Consultation](#) and public comment on a proposed Section 1115 demonstration waiver application that would authorize Medicaid coverage of Traditional Health Care Practices provided by the Alaska Tribal Health System. [View the full application here](#). The Traditional Healing Workgroup engaged with DOH throughout the drafting process to provide Tribal feedback and edits to the document. Because of this, ANHB supported an expedited Tribal Consultation period of 30 days. Written comments are due by November 4, 2026, to Christal Hays, Alaska Department of Health, 3601 C Street, Suite 902, Anchorage, AK 99503, or doh.thcp.1115@alaska.gov. ANHB applauds this important step towards the sustainability and expansion of Tribal Traditional Healing practices in Alaska.

DOH Initiates Tribal Consultation on School Based Services SPA

On October 1, the Alaska Department of Health (DOH) [initiated Tribal Consultation](#) on a State Plan Amendment (SPA) intended to clarify Medicaid reimbursement policy for services delivered in school-based settings to Medicaid-eligible student beneficiaries. View the [Tribal Leader Letter](#) and the [public notice page](#) for more details on the SPA. If you would like ANHB to request a virtual “in-person” Tribal Consultation on the SPA, please let us know by October 16, 2026. Written comments are due no later than the close of business on October 30, 2026, to Christal Hays, Alaska Department of Health, 3601 C Street, Suite 902, Anchorage, AK 99503, or christal.hays@alaska.gov.

RHTP Updates: Year Two Fall 2026 Application Window Opens, Public Comment Opportunity, & Year One Funding Allocation Status

The Alaska Department of Health (DOH) has launched the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Year Two fall cycle application portal. The deadline to submit applications for the Year 2

2026 Meeting Dates

October 18-22, 2026

NCAI Annual Convention
Palm Springs, CA

October 22, 2026

IHS Tribal Delegation Meeting
Anchorage, AK

October 22-24, 2026

Alaska Federation of Natives Annual Convention
Anchorage, AK

October 27, 2026

RHTP Regional Planning Meeting
Utqiagvik, AK

October 27-28, 2026

IHS CSC Advisory Workgroup
Sacramento, CA

October 28, 2026

ANHB CFO Workgroup
Anchorage, AK

October 29, 2026

Medicaid Task Force
Anchorage, AK

November 2, 2026

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

November 17, 2026

RHTP Regional Planning Meeting
Juneau, AK

November 18-20, 2026

ANTHC Board of Directors Meeting

fall cycle is 11:59 pm Alaska time on Wednesday, October 28, 2026.
[Access the application here.](#)

DOH has initiated public comment on the evaluation frameworks they will use to assess Year Two applications. Comments on the evaluation frameworks are due **today, October 9, by 5:00 pm Alaska time**, to RHTP@alaska.gov. View the proposed frameworks on the [public notice page](#).

Of Alaska's Year One RHTP funding, nearly 28% of the allocated funding will go to ANHB members, and nearly 34% to Alaska Native majority serving projects.

Notice of Proposed Changes: Behavioral Health 1115 Waiver Services Rates for Subacute Stabilization and Residential Services

The Alaska Department of Health (DOH) has released a Notice of Proposed Changes regarding regulatory revisions to Medicaid behavioral health 1115 waiver services rates for subacute stabilization and residential services. The regulatory changes are out for public comment with a deadline of October 21, 2026 for written comments. [View the public notice for more details.](#)

MAT Conference Scheduled for October 13-15, 2026

The annual Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT) Conference is scheduled to take place next week on October 13-15, virtually. The conference brings together healthcare providers, policymakers, peers, researchers, and community partners from across Alaska and beyond. Participants will share knowledge, experiences, and practical strategies to improve access to substance use disorder treatment and strengthen recovery support for individuals, families, and communities. The conference is free to attend. [Learn more here.](#)

FEDERAL UPDATES



CMS Approves Traditional Healing 1115 Demonstration Waivers in Utah and Maine

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved Section 1115 demonstration waiver applications in Maine and Utah, authorizing Medicaid reimbursement for Tribal Traditional Health Care Practices in these states. Medicaid reimbursement provides a sustainable funding pathway for these services, allowing Tribes to strengthen and expand access to traditional healing practices. Additional traditional healing proposals remain under CMS consideration, including Minnesota's application and an [application recently submitted](#) by Washington. Alaska has recently opened public comment on its draft application, which has not yet been submitted to CMS.

Anchorage, AK

December 2, 2026

ANTHC Annual Meeting
Anchorage, AK

December 8-9, 2026

HHS STAC Meeting
Washington, DC

December 8-10, 2026

ANHB Annual Meeting & IHS Budget Formulation
Anchorage, AK

2027 Meeting Dates

February 9-11, 2026

ANHB Mega Meeting
Juneau, AK

March 23-24, 2027

ATHC Pre-Negotiations
Anchorage, AK

May 10-14, 2027

ATHC Final Negotiations
Anchorage, AK

Public Comment Opportunity: U.S. Census Bureau Tribal Consultation

The U.S. Census Bureau is accepting Tribal Consultation comments on its [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) issued on September 10, 2026. If adopted, the rule would change how the 2030 census counts every person in the United States. Notably, the proposed rule would remove the Race/Ethnicity questions, thereby failing to collect data about American Indian and Alaska Native populations in the country. This change could significantly impact funding for Indian Country and Alaska related to housing, community development, maternal health, and transportation. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has put out [an overview of the changes](#). NCAI also [submitted comments](#) requesting additional Tribal Consultations on this topic. The public comment period runs through November 2, 2026; comments can be submitted [via the Federal Register](#).

IHS October 6, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter

In an October 6, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter (DTLL), Director Cruz shared that the Indian Health Service (IHS) has made updates to agency processes including the process for requesting and coordinating speaking engagements with Agency leadership and the process for Tribal Delegation Meetings (TDMs). [View the full DTLL](#) for more details.

GAO Issues Report on Tribal Water Infrastructure

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has completed a review of federal tribal water infrastructure assistance and released a public report. The report includes several recommendations to Congress, the Indian Health Service (IHS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and other federal agencies. GAO conducted a site visit to Alaska as part of its review and met with ANHB membership in 2024. [Read the full report and recommendations here](#).

Abstract Submissions Open for the 2027 Public Health Preparedness Summit

The [2027 Preparedness Summit](#), the country's first and longest-running national conference on public health preparedness, is now accepting abstracts. The theme for the 2027 Preparedness Summit, "Preparing for What's Next: Building Bridges for a More Connected Future," focuses on how the preparedness ecosystem can continue to adapt, align, and sustain readiness during a period of ongoing change while maintaining the foundational capabilities that support readiness and response. The [abstract submission](#) period is open through October 27, 2026 (11:59 PM ET).

IHS Initiates Tribal Consultation on Loan Repayment Program

In a [September 24, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter \(DTLL\)](#), the Indian Health Service (IHS) announced Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer on modernizing the Loan Repayment Program (LRP). The IHS seeks feedback on LRP application requirements, recommendations

for simplifying or improving the application and annual reporting processes while maintaining the appropriate program accountability, and requests input with identifying potential deficiencies, barriers, or unnecessary burdens associated with the IHS LRP. The deadline to provide written comments is **October 23**. Comments can be submitted to consultation@ihs.gov.

IHS to Hold Listening Session on Health Care Facilities Construction Priority System

In a [September 24, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter \(DTLL\)](#), the Indian Health Service (IHS) announced it will be holding an informational listening session on the IHS Health Care Facilities Construction Priority System and the remaining projects on the IHS Facilities Construction Priority List. The listening session will take place on **October 20** from 4:30 – 6:00 PM PDT, during the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Annual Convention and Marketplace in Palm Springs, California.

OTHER UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS



ANHB Welcomes Native Village of Chitina as Newest ANHB Member

ANHB is pleased to announce that the [Native Village of Chitina](#) has joined us as a new ANHB member organization. Located in the Copper River Basin, the Native Village of Chitina is a sovereign, federally recognized Tribe that partners with Southcentral Foundation to provide primary care services at the Chitina Community Clinic. ANHB welcomes the Native Village of Chitina as our newest ANHB member.

Funding Opportunity: ANTHC Behavioral Health Youth & Family Prevention Subaward RFP

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Behavioral Health Department has released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Healing Pathways for Strong Communities (HPSC) Youth & Family Prevention Subaward. Through funding provided by the SAMHSA Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) grant, ANTHC will award approximately \$375,000 annually to support community-driven prevention initiatives that strengthen youth, families, and communities through culturally grounded approaches to wellness, resilience, and substance misuse prevention. Eligible applicants include Tribes, Tribal organizations, and community-based organizations serving Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) youth and families. [See the full RFP for more information](#). Applications are due by October 15, 2026.

BBAHC President/CEO Robert J. Clark Announces Retirement

Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (BBAHC) President/CEO Robert J. Clark has announced his retirement following more than five

decades of service. ANHB thanks Mr. Clark for his many years of service and for his dedicated advocacy on behalf of the BBAHC region as well as the entire Alaska Tribal Health System through his role as Chair of the Association of Tribal Health Directors. BBAHC has shared that the Board of Directors is leading a thoughtful transition process focused on maintaining leadership continuity, operational stability, and meaningful engagement with employees, Tribal leaders, communities, and other stakeholders. [View BBAHC's full press release here.](#)

ANTHC Announces Transfer of Ownership of ANMC

On September 4, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) announced that the Indian Health Service (IHS) has officially transferred ownership of the Alaska Native Medical Center (ANMC) to ANTHC. ANHB congratulates ANTHC, Southcentral Foundation, and the Alaska Tribal Health System on this historic achievement. The transfer of ownership took decades to secure and was achieved thanks to the advocacy of Tribal leaders and the Alaska Tribal Health System. For more details on the transfer of ownership of ANMC, [read ANTHC's media release 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.

- **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

Alaska Native Health Board | 4000 Ambassador Drive, Suite 101, Anchorage, AK 99508
907-729-7510 | www.anhb.org | anhb@anhb.org

Please reply 'Unsubscribe' if you no longer wish to receive ANHB Updates.