

ANHB UPDATE



October 23, 2026

Inside this issue:

State Updates

- ANHB to Host Medicaid Task Force and CFO Workgroup Meetings
- Template Letter: Tribal Consultation on Traditional Healing Waiver Application
- RHTP Updates: Completion of Year 1 Funding Cycle; Year Two Fall 2026 Application Window Open
- DOH Initiates Tribal Consultation on School Based Services SPA
- New Alaska Medicaid Travel Vendor is Live

Federal Updates

- ANHB Hosts IHS Tribal Delegation Meeting with Director Cruz
- ANHB Attends NCAI Annual Convention in Palm Springs, CA
- Template Letter; Public Comment Opportunity: U.S. Census Bureau Tribal Consultation
- CMS Approves Traditional Healing 1115 Demonstration Waivers in Utah and Maine
- NIHB to Host Maternal Health Promotion Institute: October 26-27
- IHS Updates Medicare Part D Creditable Coverage Letter
- 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

Other Updates & Announcements

- SCF to Host Typhoon Halong Survivor Wellness Gathering: October 24
- ANHB Welcomes Native Village of Chitina as Newest ANHB Member
- ANHB Workgroups
- Upcoming Events

STATE UPDATES



ANHB to Host Medicaid Task Force and CFO Workgroup Meetings

Next Thursday, October 29, ANHB will host the biannual Medicaid Task Force (MTF) meeting with the Alaska Department of Health (DOH). The meeting will take place in person in Anchorage and over Zoom. MTF is an opportunity for discussion with DOH leadership on Medicaid issues as well as the Rural Health Transformation Program. The CFO Workgroup will meet on October 28 in preparation for MTF, also using a hybrid in person and virtual format. Please reach out to ANHB at anhb@anhb.org with any questions.

Template Letter: Tribal Consultation 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](#). **ANHB has distributed a [template comment letter](#) as a starting point for T/THOs developing comments.** 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.

RHTP Updates: Completion of Year 1 Funding Cycle; Year Two Fall 2026 Application Window Open

On October 22, the Alaska Department of Health (DOH) announced the completion of the Year 1 funding cycle for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP). DOH has awarded just under \$249 million to 254 projects. Alaska's full RHTP Year 1 award was \$272 million. DOH states that the remaining award balance supports administration, evaluation and oversight of the RHTP program. A [full list of Year 1 projects](#) is available on the DOH website. ANHB has calculated that of Alaska's Year 1 RHTP funding, nearly 26% of the allocated funding will go to ANHB members, and nearly 32% to Alaska Native majority serving projects.

DOH has launched the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Year Two fall cycle application portal. The deadline to submit applications for the Year 2 fall cycle is **11:59 pm Alaska time on Wednesday, October 28, 2026**. [Access the application here](#).

DOH Initiates Tribal Consultation on School Based Services SPA

2026 Meeting Dates

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 9, 2026

RHTP Regional Planning Meeting
Kodiak, AK

November 17, 2026

RHTP Regional Planning Meeting
Juneau, AK

November 18-20, 2026

ANTHC Board of Directors Meeting
Anchorage, AK

December 2, 2026

ANTHC Annual Meeting

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. 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.

New Alaska Medicaid Travel Vendor is Live

Alaska Medicaid now has a new vendor to handle Medicaid travel logistics. The transition to the new vendor, Intelligent Travel Services (ITS), went live on October 21. The ITS team is trained in Medicaid travel operations and has received Alaska-specific training on rural travel and logistics. Until November 8, the old vendor will still be available as part of the transition. Thereafter, ITS will be the sole travel logistics vendor.

FEDERAL UPDATES



ANHB Hosts IHS Tribal Delegation Meeting with Director Cruz

This week, ANHB hosted a Tribal Delegation Meeting (TDM) with Indian Health Service (IHS) Director Mark Cruz. ANHB members raised topics including IHS Realignment, the budget formulation process, the Contract Support Cost Advisory Group, facilities construction, and others, and engaged in robust discussion. This was Director Cruz's first visit to Alaska in his new role. Director Cruz also attended and spoke at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Annual Convention during his visit.

ANHB Attends NCAI Annual Convention in Palm Springs, CA

This week, ANHB staff attended the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Annual Convention to participate in Alaska Caucus meetings, Health Subcommittee meetings, and the IHS listening session on the Health Care Facilities Construction Priority System. Attendees also heard updates from Indian Health Service (IHS) leadership, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA).

Template Letter; 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. The

Anchorage, AK

December 8-9, 2026
HHS STAC Meeting
Washington, DC

December 8-10, 2026
ANHB Annual Meeting & IHS Budget Formulation
Anchorage, AK

December 15, 2026
Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee Virtual

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

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has put out [an overview of the changes](#). ANHB has created a [template comment letter](#) to provide a starting point for T/THOs to develop their comments. The public comment period runs through November 2, 2026, and comments can be submitted [via the Federal Register](#).

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.

NIHB to Host Maternal Health Promotion Institute: October 26-27

The National Indian Health Board (NIHB) will host the 6th annual Maternal Health Promotion Institute on October 26-27, 2026, from 2:00 – 5:00 PM EST on both days. The event will be recorded and made public. Over two days, participants will learn about NIHB's maternal health efforts, lessons learned, and priorities moving forward, with a foundation in cultural safety. An Indigenous provider panel will explore the values, experiences, and approaches that support culturally safe care within Western healthcare systems. [Register here](#).

IHS Updates Medicare Part D Creditable Coverage Letter

In an October 15, 2026 Dear Tribal Leader Letter (DTLL), Indian Health Service (IHS) Director Cruz announced that IHS has updated the Medicare Part D Creditable Coverage Letter to reflect the current Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services guidance confirming that prescription drug coverage provided through the IHS, Tribal Health Programs, and Urban Indian Organizations (I/T/U) is creditable coverage for Medicare Part D purposes. [Read the full DTLL here](#).

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 **today, October 23**. Comments can be submitted to consultation@ihs.gov.

OTHER UDPATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS



SCF to Host Typhoon Halong Survivor Wellness Gathering: October 24

Southcentral Foundation is hosting a fall wellness gathering for individuals impacted by Typhoon Halong this Saturday, October 24, from 2 PM - 6 PM, at the Birchwood Camp in Chugiak, Alaska. This will be a time for healing and community fellowship. There will be subsistence foods, traditional crafts, hiking, maqii (available noon-2 PM), learning circles, and a concert by Marc Brown. Transportation from Anchorage will be provided and will depart at 1 PM. If you plan on taking advantage of their transportation, please meet at the parking lot of Yagheli Shesh Qenq'a Anchorage Native Primary Care Center, 4320 Diplomacy Drive in Anchorage. For information about this event or to arrange transportation, please contact Southcentral Foundation Piniq by calling (907) 729-5442.

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.

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.

