



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SAC-06-048

**TITLE: Recommendation for VHA and IHS to Develop a Federal/Tribal Work Group to Examine Feasibility of Having VHA Serve CHS Patients; and for IHS to Serve as a VHA Provider of Care to AI/AN and non-Indian Veterans**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, in February 2003 the Departments of Health and Human Services and Veterans Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to promote cooperation and sharing between the VHA and IHS to further each Department's respective mission and to encourage cooperation and resource sharing between the two agencies with the goal of delivering health care services and enhance the health of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) veterans; and

**WHEREAS**, the goal of the MOU is to use the strengths and expertise of both organizations to deliver quality health care services and enhance the health status of AI/AN veterans; and

**WHEREAS**, the VHA as a federal health provider is in the position provide many health services that IHS and Tribal Contract Health Service (CHS) programs must refer patients to the private sector for specialty care and likewise, the IHS and Tribal health programs as a federal health provider are in a position to provide health services to AI/AN veterans who must travel great distances to VHA facilities to receive; and

**WHEREAS**, there is an opportunity for collaboration between the VHA and IHS under VHA/IHS MOU to provide services to one another's patients and reduce the burden of travel for AI/AN and non-Indian veterans by having them receive services at IHS facilities and having the VHA reimburse the IHS or Tribal health program for those costs; and

**WHEREAS**, there is an opportunity for collaboration between the VHA and IHS under VHA/IHS MOU to have the VHA serve as a provider of care for patients referred under the CHS program and have the VHA be reimbursed for that care; and

**WHEREAS**, the benefits of this collaboration would enhance the quality of health care by reducing the burden of travel and time to receive health services and reduce costs for each agency that will translate into more health care services that can be provided to veterans and Indian people.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NCAI does hereby encourage the VHA and IHS to develop a Federal/Tribal work group to determine the feasibility of having the VHA serve as a provider of care under the Indian Health Service's CHS Program and for IHS and Tribal provider to serve as a provider of care to AI/AN and non-Indian veterans and be reimbursed for the cost of that care by the VHA; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the NCAI supports the VHA and IHS to collaborate on this very important effort since each program is a federal provider of health care and the effort will maximize federal funding appropriated by Congress and if necessary the Federal/Tribal workgroup should seek legislation to carry out the objectives of this resolution; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2006 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Sacramento Convention Center in Sacramento, California on October 1-6, 2006, with a quorum present.

  
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President

**ATTEST:**

  
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Recording Secretary