

National Indian Health Board



Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee Meets with IHS Leadership

On October 8-9th, 2019, representatives from the Tribal Leaders Diabetes Committee (TLDC) met in Buellton, CA to discuss the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI). TLDC members spent a portion of the meeting in conversation with RADM Michael Weahkee, the IHS Principal Deputy Director. The Tribal leaders on TLDC discussed their recommendations for SDPI funding, and reiterated the need for both more secure funding, and a funding increase. SDPI has remained at a funding level of \$150 million per year since 2004. As California TLDC Representative Rosemary Nelson stated, “It’s a sad day when after 15 years at \$150 million, there is no increase in the SDPI funding, in light of the cost savings, and increased quality of life that Tribes have brought to the table.” RADM Weahkee conveyed that he has shared the SDPI Tribal budget request with Congress, including the importance of mandatory and permanent funding, and the request for an increase in funding to \$200 million a year. RADM Weahkee also shared that IHS is requesting Congress fund Health Information Technology (IT) through a separate line item so that IT funding is not piecemealed together from other programs such as SDPI. The TLDC also received information about current and prior years undispersed SDPI funds.



RADM Michael Weahkee (right) met with TLDC members, including California Area TLDC Representative Rosemary Nelson (left)

Following the discussion with RADM Weahkee, two AI/AN health programs in California shared several successes of their SDPI programs. The Santa Ynez Tribal Health Clinic reported great results from their medical, dental, preventative, and behavioral health services- between 2017 and 2019, the clinic increased influenza-vaccine uptake by 16%, depression screening by 23%, and eye exam rates by 10%. A1C levels <8, indicating good control of blood sugar, also increased by 10%. The American Indian Health and Services, an Urban clinic in Santa Barbara also shared great results- in 2019, eye exam rates improved by 43%, and foot exam rates improved by 34%.

On October 2, 2019, IHS released a [Dear Tribal Leader Letter](#) and [Dear Urban Indian Leader Letter](#) to initiate the 60-day consultation/confer on the SDPI funding distribution for fiscal year 2012. Each IHS Area will hold Area Consultation meetings and comments can also be submitted via email to consultation@ihs.gov. The results of the consultation/confer will be presented to the TLDC at the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for December 3-4, 2019 in Orlando, FL. TLDC representatives will then make recommendations to the IHS based on the consultation/confer.

TLDC did express concern over the reauthorization status of SDPI, which is again set to expire. Current congressional funding through a continuing resolution is only through November 21, 2019. As the SDPI grant year cycle does not directly match with the congressional appropriations cycle, this only equates to approximately 7 weeks of funding for FY 2019-2020 SDPI programs. SDPI must be reauthorized again before November 21st to prevent a lapse in funding for this life-saving program.

For more information about TLDC and diabetes in Indian Country, [click here](#)

To identify your Area’s TLDC member, [click here](#).