

VA Indian Health Service (IHS) / Tribal Health Program (THP) Reimbursement Agreement Program

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Majed Ibrahim,
Chief Network Management

VA



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Background

- The VA- IHS/THP Reimbursement Agreements Program provides a means for IHS and THP health facilities to receive reimbursement from the VA for direct care services provided to eligible American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Veterans.
- This program is part of a larger effort set forth in the VA and IHS Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2010 to improve access to care and care coordination for our nation's Native Veterans.
- The National VA-IHS Reimbursement Agreement signed in December 2015, and we began executing individual THP Agreements at that time.
- The National Agreement and THP Reimbursement Agreements with individual THPs and Alaska THPs extended to June 30, 2022.

IHS/THP Milestones

- October 1, 2010: the VA Under Secretary for Health and the IHS Director signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- March-May 2012: VA, IHS, and THPs initiated tribal consultation on a draft national agreement.
- June 2012: Confirmed the approach of one National Agreement with IHS and individual sharing agreements under 38 USC 8153 for THPs due to their sovereign nature.
- August 24, 2012: VA Under Secretary for Health signed and distributed the Dear Tribal Leader Letter with program guidance.
- December 5, 2012: VA-IHS National Agreement signed.
- June 28, 2018: VA-IHS National Agreement was extended through June 30, 2022.
- June 2018 - present: Most THPs Agreements were extended through June 30th, 2022.
- Present: Ongoing coordination and onboarding of THPs.

Benefits

- **Collaboration** - Promotes quality health care through collaborative relationships both intergovernmental by sharing resources and with the community
- **Choice of Provider and Access** - Eligible AI/AN Veterans can choose to receive their health care from the IHS/THP facility and/or VA facility closer to their homes in a culturally sensitive environment.
- **Pharmacy** – facilities will be reimbursed for outpatient medications dispensed by the facility that are on the VA's formulary. This is not limited to emergent prescriptions
- **No Copayment** – Pursuant to section 405(c) of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), VA copayments do not apply to direct care services delivered by the IHS or THP healthcare facility to eligible AI/AN Veterans under agreements with VA.

Benefits Continued

- **No Outstanding Balances**
 - For United States lower 48 states, IHS and THP medical facilities bill third parties prior to billing VA. This means VA is only responsible for the balance remaining after third party reimbursements.
 - For Alaska Tribal Facilities, VA reimbursement payment under this agreement is considered as payment in full. Alaska THPs or other organizations cannot be reimbursed for such care from entities or individuals other than the VA.

Direct Care Services

- Reimbursement is for Direct Care Services
- Direct Care Services are defined as any health service that is provided directly by IHS/THP. This does not include Contract Health Services, unless those services are provided within the walls of the IHS or THP facility.
- VA will not reimburse for any services that are excluded from the Medical Benefits package or for which the eligible AI/AN Veteran does not meet qualifying criteria.

Payment Methodologies and Fees

- **Inpatient** hospital services are based on Medicare Inpatient Prospective Patient System (IPPS) for Lower 48 and All Inclusive Per diem Rate for Alaska.
- **Outpatient** services are based on the IHS All Inclusive Rate published in the Federal Register.
- **Critical Access Hospitals** are reimbursed at the established rate as determined by Medicare.
- **Ambulatory Surgical Services** are reimbursed at Medicare rates.
- **Administrative fees** applied to the following claims:
 - Except for Pharmacy, paper claims will incur a \$15 fee for the duration of agreements

Eligibility and Enrollment

- VA, IHS and THP are responsible for determining eligibility for health care services within their respective programs.
- The eligible Veteran must also meet IHS eligibility requirements and be eligible for services in accordance with 42 C.F.R. Part 136.
- Veterans must be enrolled in the VA system before a claim can be processed and reimbursed.

Status

- To date, VA has reimbursed over \$96 million for direct care services provided by IHS & THPs covering over 10,100 eligible AI/AN Veterans.
- IHS:77 Implementation plans signed.
- THP: Currently 114 signed agreements, with ~40 tribes in progress.

Basics for Establishing Agreements



- Using the agreement template, the VAMC, THP, and Contracting Officer work together to complete the draft reimbursement agreement.
- The national template shall always be used.
- Concurrently, the THP works to satisfy local implementation criteria.
- Once the draft is complete, it will be reviewed by Office of Community Care, Network Contracting Office and Regional Counsel, respectively.
- After final signatures, reimbursement for direct care can commence.

IHS/THP Agreements Versus Other MOUs

Reimbursement agreements:

- Apply only to AI/AN Veterans receiving direct care services, except in Alaska.
- Do not relate to existing Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) or sharing agreements.
- Program guidance and authorities for these agreements do not apply to other agreements or MOUs that maybe in progress and/or in place.
- While some VA Medical Centers' (VAMCs) staff involved with Reimbursement Agreements might also be the points of contact for other MOU development efforts, the efforts should be considered separate and distinct.

IHS/THP Resources and Contact Information

Information on how to establish agreements, templates, forms and guides about the program are housed at Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Office of Community Care

<https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/ihs/index.asp>

https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/info_IHS-THP.asp

For more information on getting started with Tribal Health Program agreements, please contact us via email at: tribal.agreements@va.gov

The screenshot shows the VA website page for the Indian Health Service / Tribal Health Program (IHS/THP) Community Care. The page is titled "Community Care" and features a "QUICK LINKS" section with options for Hospital Locator, Health Programs, Protect Your Health, and A-Z Health Topics. The main content area is titled "Indian Health Service / Tribal Health Program (IHS/THP)" and provides information about the program, including a description of the reimbursement process and a link to the OTGR Veteran Resources website. The page also includes a "Contacts" section with the IHS/THP Team email address (tribal.agreements@va.gov) and a "Resources" section with a link to the Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) website. The VA logo and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs name are visible in the top right corner.



VA MISSION Act: An Overview Of Key Elements



What is the MISSION Act?

The VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act of 2018 will fundamentally transform VA's health care system. It will fulfill the president's commitment to provide Veterans with more choice in their health care providers. The Act includes four main pillars:

1. Consolidating VA's community care programs.
2. Expansion of Caregivers Program
3. Flexibility to align its asset and infrastructure
4. Strengthening VA's ability to recruit and retain health care professionals.



What is it NOT?

The MISSION Act is not a step toward privatization. It's about significantly improving Veterans' experience and enhancing their access to care.



Key Elements

Community Care - Consolidates VA's multiple community care programs into one that is easier to navigate for Veterans and their families, community providers and VA employees.

Caregivers Program - The Act expands eligibility for VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) by including eligible Veterans from all eras of service.

Asset and Infrastructure - The Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) process in the Act will provide VA the necessary flexibility to align its infrastructure footprint with the needs of the nation's Veterans.

Recruit and Retain - The Act will allow for additional, improved recruitment efforts, including a new scholarship program, greater access to VA's education debt-reduction program and improved flexibility for providing bonuses for recruitment, relocation and retention.

Veteran Community Care: Key Changes

New for Veterans

Veterans receive new benefits under the Veteran Community Care Program. These benefits include:

- Access to urgent care
- Expanded eligibility for community care
- Scheduling by the Veteran and VHA
- Technology that streamlines communication

New for Community Care Providers

Establishment of the Community Care Network and Veteran Care Agreements. Community providers must now:

- Undergo an industry standard credentialing process
- Be subject to an exclusionary process
- Complete mandatory training
- Technology that streamlines bidirectional communication

New for VA Staff

Introduction of new and modernized IT systems and business processes that will result in:

- Fewer manual process / increased automation
- Increased availability of performance metrics
- Broader options for care coordination
- Faster, easier, auditable information sharing

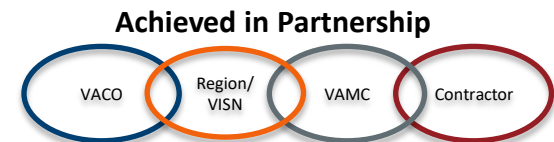
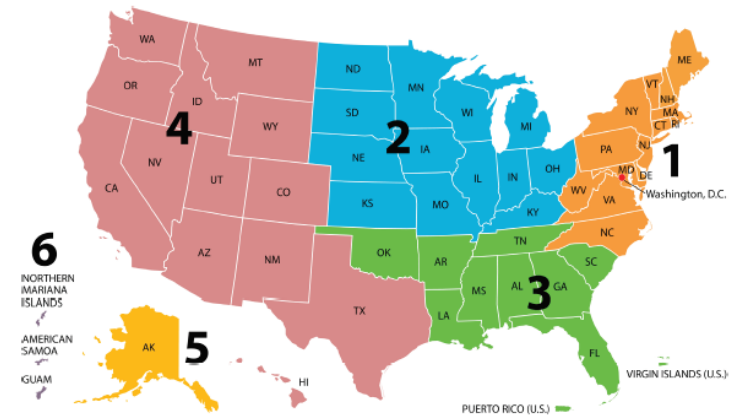
Only direct impact to the IHS/THP reimbursement program is section 101, which allows for the continuation of the program

Community Care Network (CCN)

The **Community Care Network (CCN)** is a new set of **region-based** contracts to provide health care services in the community through a contractor who **builds** and **credentials** the associated network and **processes claims**.

Benefits of the CCN:

- Gives VA control of Veteran care and experience
 - VA is taking back **scheduling, care coordination,** and **customer service** functions
- Gives VA convenient access to a network of qualified, **credentialed providers**
 - by having a provider network **accredited** by a nationally recognized accrediting body
 - by increasing local collaboration on **network development**
 - by having visibility into the **provider network** via the Provider Profile Management System (PPMS)
- Gives VA a streamlined community care processes
 - by including **more services** under CCN
 - by **no longer** adjudicating claims



Community Provider Resources

VA Community Provider Website



- Update with latest Community Care Network, MISSION Act, etc. fact sheets,
- Post any Community Care programs and policy changes,
- Provide links to external websites of interest/use for providers
- <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/index.asp>

VHA Provider Updates Newsletter



- A monthly e-publication for community providers that delivers scheduled updates about programs, policies and changes.
- Subscribe at:
https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVHA/subscriber/new?topic_id=USVHA_1240


VA Community Provider Webinar Series



- Office of Community Care Overview Series: An overview of Community Care Programs.
- Accredited Topics Series: Accredited webinars with VA experts presenting on health care-related topics.
- Register at:
<https://www.train.org/vha/welcome>

Click [here](#) for detailed information on community care and urgent care.

Community Resources

- VA Mission Act and New Veterans Community Care Program Fact Sheet
https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-13.pdf
- Video – Community Care Network
<https://youtu.be/T4t4M1cVybE>
- Community Providers Webpage
<https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/index.asp>
- CCN fact sheet

CCN Fact Sheet
- Community Care Network (CCN) Fact Sheet Library
<https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/pubs/factsheets.asp>