



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

**Indian Policy Advisory Committee**

**P.O. Box 45105, Olympia, Washington 98504-5105**

December 20, 2012

Dear Tribal Leaders,

In formal consultation with Washington's Tribes, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Health Care Authority (HCA) have committed to work with Washington's Tribes through representatives of the Indian Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC), American Indian Health Commission for Washington State (AIHC), and Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NWPaiHB) to develop a new behavioral health system for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people enrolled in the Medicaid program.

The redesign will first focus on developing a new mental health service delivery system. Later, the project will be expanded to include integrated chemical dependency (CD) services as a significant component. This will insure that the new system addresses the co-occurring behavioral health needs of AI/AN people.

In July 2012 IPAC, AIHC, NWPaiHB, DSHS and HCA reconvened a workgroup to begin developing the new system. The regular meetings of the workgroup are the first and third Tuesday afternoons of the month. The workgroup identified a set of 8 near-term tasks to improve care for AI/AN people eligible for Medicaid services through the Regional Support Networks (RSN). These improvements, which are outlined in the enclosed paper, will be components in the new system. Subcommittees are now working on these tasks, which we hope to have completed by July 2013.

The workgroup also identified key components for the new system. The enclosed paper has been prepared for Tribal leaders, health directors and mental health program directors and providers to provide background information on the existing Medicaid mental health system for AI/AN people and attributes for the new system that the workgroup has identified.

We are requesting that you would provide us your ideas on what the new behavioral health system should include to better serve your members, other AI/AN people that you serve, and AI/AN people who live in other areas. We are also asking our urban Indian health program to provide us their ideas on what the new system should be.

We are requesting your input for our first meeting in January, therefore if you can send comments by January 8, 2013 to: Colleen F. Cawston, Senior Director Office of Indian Policy, [colleen.cawston@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:colleen.cawston@dshs.wa.gov) or 360-902-7816.

Sincerely,



Liz Mueller, Chair  
Indian Policy Advisory Committee



Marilyn Scott, Chair  
American Indian Health Commission

Enclosure

cc: IPAC Delegates  
AIHC Delegates  
Robin Arnold Williams, Secretary DSHS  
MaryAnn Lindeblad, Director HCA  
Colleen F. Cawston, OIP  
Roger Gantz, AIHC  
David Reed, DBHR  
Deb Sosa, HCA