IHS to Host Health Information Technology Modernization Program Virtual Summit for Tribal and Urban Indian Leaders on December 13

Category: Policy Blog
written by Alexandra Payan | November 17, 2023

On November 13, 2023, the Indian Health Service (IHS) released a Dear Tribal Leader Letter (DTLL) and Dear Urban Indian Organization (UIO) Leader (DULL) letter announcing that they will be hosting a Health Information Technology (HIT) Modernization Program Virtual Summit (Virtual Summit) on Wednesday, December 13, 2023 from 11:00 am – 5:30 pm EST. This one-day Virtual Summit is an opportunity for Tribal and UIO leaders to learn more about the new Electronic Health Record (EHR) and engage in robust and meaningful conversations with the IHS on important issues impacting Tribal and urban Indian communities as a result of the HIT Modernization program. During the Virtual Summit, IHS will host a caucus allowing Tribal and UIO leaders the opportunity to independently exchange viewpoints and share information.

Please register for the Virtual Summit here.

View the Virtual Summit Agenda here.

Background

HIT "is a broad concept that encompasses an array of technologies to store, share, and analyze health information." This includes, but is not limited to, "the use of computer hardware and software to privately and securely store, retrieve, and share patient health and medical information." HIT Modernization for the IHS, Tribal organization, and urban Indian organization (I/T/U) system is long overdue. Although HIT is necessary to provide critical services and benefits to American Indian and Alaska Native patients, the IHS has historically faced challenges in managing clinical patient and administrative data through the Resource Management System (RPMS). Initially developed specifically for the IHS, years of underfunding and a resulting failure to keep pace with technological innovation have left the RPMS impractical by current HIT standards. RPMS has been in use for nearly 40 years and has developed significant issues and deficiencies during this time, especially in recent years as HIT systems have rapidly advanced in sophistication and usefulness. As the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) and IHS found in the 2019 Legacy Assessment, systemic challenges with RPMS "across all of the IHS ecosystem currently prevent providers, facilities and the organization from leveraging technology effectively."

During the November 8, 2023 Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer on HIT Modernization, IHS announced that they have selected General Dynamics Information Technology, Inc. to build, configure, and maintain an new IHS enterprise EHR system utilizing Oracle Cerner technology. The new EHR will replace the RPMS.

NCUIH Action

NCUIH has submitted several written comments to IHS on HIT Modernization. NCUIH also submitted written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies regarding the Fiscal year (FY) 2024 funding for UIOs in which NCUIH requested increased funding for EHR Modernization. Specifically, NCUIH requested support for the IHS' transition to a new EHR system for IHS and UIOs by supporting the President's budget request of $913 million in FY 2024 appropriations.

- NCUIH comments to IHS on HIT Modernization (April 8, 2023)
- NCUIH comments to IHS on Resource and Patient Management System Replacement and Health Information Technology Modernization Focus Groups (June 23, 2023)