PRESS RELEASE: CMS Approves Traditional Healing Waivers in Utah and Maine, Inclusion of Utah Urban Indian Organizations

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 25, 2026) – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved section 1115 applications from Utah and Maine to provide reimbursement for Traditional Healing for eligible beneficiaries. The approvals advance recognition of traditional health care practices for American Indian and Alaska Native people.

> "Traditional Healing is an essential part of Native health care, and these approvals for Utah and Maine build on the momentum we've seen since CMS's first Medicaid approvals," said Francys Crevier, J.D. (Algonquin), CEO of the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH). "Utah's inclusion of Urban Indian Organizations is especially meaningful for Native people who receive care in urban communities. We are proud to have worked alongside the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake and Tribes to support Utah's application, and we look forward to seeing both states put these approvals into practice to help Indian health providers sustain culturally grounded care for the communities they serve."

Secretary Kennedy announced the approvals during the September 22, 2026, meeting of the HHS Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee in Jamul, California. "I'm proud to announce today that CMS has approved 1115 waivers in Maine and Utah," he said. He described the approvals as expanding access to traditional health care practices and strengthening treatment for substance use and serious mental illness.

Utah's Inclusion of Urban Indian Organizations

Utah's Traditional Healing application expressly identifies Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) as eligible entities. Utah is home to the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake, which provides traditional healing programming as part of its care for the Salt Lake City Native community.

The CMS Tribal Technical Advisory Group (TTAG), of which NCUIH is a member, recently encouraged CMS to approve the pending section 1115 applications to provide reimbursement for Traditional Healing services—including Utah's application. NCUIH has also asked CMS to provide guidance encouraging states with UIOs to include them when developing and implementing Traditional Healing coverage.

The Utah and Maine approvals follow CMS's 2024 section 1115 Traditional Healing approvals in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Oregon. As NCUIH explained in its earlier release, those

states' authorities differ in how they provide for UIO participation and reimbursement.

Next Steps

NCUIH will review the final approval documents and work with CMS, Utah, the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake, and other partners as Utah implements its authority. NCUIH continues to support Traditional Healing waivers, including those that include UIOs.

Links to Demonstration Approvals

- **Utah:** https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/196011
- **Maine:** https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demo/demonstration-and-waiver-list/81926

Related NCUIH Resources

- Traditional Healing research, reports, and resources
- Culture is medicine. People are medicine. — Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake
- NCUIH's 2024 release on traditional healing approvals

About NCUIH

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is a national representative for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations contracting with the Indian Health Service under the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*. NCUIH is devoted to the support and development of high quality and accessible health and public health services for American Indian and Alaska Native people living in urban areas.

NCUIH respects and supports Tribal sovereignty and the unique government-to-government relationship between our Tribal Nations and the United States. NCUIH works to support those federal laws, policies, and procedures that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship. NCUIH does not support any federal law, policy, or procedure that infringes upon or in any way diminishes Tribal sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship.

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