

A message below from our IHS Director, Dr Yvette Roubideaux, regarding National Native American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Saturday, March 20, is the fourth annual National Native American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. This day is set aside to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and to encourage all of us to support and advocate for HIV education and services regardless of our usual roles and responsibilities. We know that HIV/AIDS exists in urban and rural populations (and on or near tribal lands), yet many Native people with HIV are not aware of their status.

In the United States, American Indians and Alaska Natives rank third in the rate of new HIV infections as compared to all other races and ethnicities. Native Americans face greater health disparities and risk factors for HIV, such as higher rates of substance abuse and sexually transmitted infections. These statistics illuminate the need to raise awareness about HIV and demonstrate the need for ongoing initiatives that help make HIV testing, education, and health care a routine part of our health services.

Expansion of our National IHS HIV Program continues with a strong sense of commitment to the community, partnership with Tribes, and the goal of increasing access to quality HIV services, including testing.

Tribes, community organizations, and health departments will be holding many events on this day, so please review the National Native American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day activities across the country. For more information on HIV/AIDS, please visit [www.aids.gov](http://www.aids.gov), or to find a testing center near you, visit [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org). I encourage all staff and community members to take part in this special day and help us protect our people and safeguard our future generations.

In addition to encouraging testing for HIV, this day also allows us the opportunity to thank dedicated staff and community members who continue to improve services, foster partnerships, and advocate for American Indians and Alaska Natives.