

Regional Update from HHS Regional Director Susan Johnson

Region 10 - Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington



Dear Colleagues:

April 2012

I was recently joined by Tribal Members, HHS officials and state representatives at the Region 10 Tribal Consultation in Seattle. With over 120 attendees from the four states in Region 10, we addressed issues from a national perspective as well as specific regional concerns and priorities. More specifically, we discussed the Affordable Care Act, Tribal and State Relations, and other cross-cutting subject areas, such as Community Well Being and Child and Family Well Being.



On the day prior to the Consultation, I also participated in 24 one-on-one meetings with Tribal Officials and HHS officials to discuss issues of concern for individual tribes.



Attendees provided passionate comments and recommendations, and I am committed to following up with you on the issues that were raised at the one-on-one meetings and the Consultation. When I receive the transcribed notes from the one-on-one meetings and the Consultation, I will work to develop a preliminary list of key issues that were identified during the meetings and Consultation. Together with Tribal Members, we will review the list of key issues on our quarterly calls and develop a timeline and action plan for addressing those issues.

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The Consultation may be over, but our work continues. I look forward to working together to achieve progress on issues raised.



Sincerely,

Susan



Recent HHS Announcements

Administration releases Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Preventive Services Policy

In March, officials at HHS, Labor, and the Treasury took the next step in the Obama administration's effort to ensure women access to recommended preventive services while respecting religious liberty. The Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking issued on March 16, 2012 outlines draft proposals to implement the policy announced by President Barack Obama and HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on Feb. 10, 2012. This policy will provide women with access to recommended preventive services including contraceptives without cost sharing, while ensuring that non-profit religious organizations are not forced to pay for, provide, or facilitate the provision of any contraceptive service they object to on religious grounds. The Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking gives all Americans the chance to formally comment on ideas for implementing this policy.

Administration officials also released a final rule governing student health plans. Under the final rule, students will gain the same consumer protections other people with individual market insurance have, like a prohibition on lifetime limits and coverage of preventive services without cost sharing. In the same way that religious colleges and universities will not have to pay, arrange or refer for contraceptive coverage for their employees, they will not have to do so for their students who will get such coverage directly and separately from their insurer.

The *Federal Register* advance notice concerning women's preventive services calls for a 90-day public comment period. **Comments are due on or before June 19, 2012.** The advance notice is [available in the Federal Register](#).

More information is also available on [women's preventive services](#) and the [student health plan final rule](#).

OLDER AMERICANS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER WEBINAR SERIES



Webinar on Depression, Anxiety and Suicide Prevention Wednesday, April 18, 2012 | 2:30-4:00 PM EST

Mental health problems affect one in five older adults. Depression and anxiety have been linked with worse physical health, higher health care costs, and lower quality of life in older adults. However, mental health disorders are treatable. This webinar will describe the prevalence and impact of depression, anxiety, and suicide in older adults, and will identify screening strategies and evidence-based treatments. Actions that state and local agencies can use to implement effective treatments will be highlighted, with a specific focus on the strategy that one Area Agency on Aging has used to implement Healthy IDEAS and PEARLS.

To register, [go here](#). To view in other time zones or languages, [adjust your time zone here](#).

Once the host approves your registration request, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions for joining the meeting. You will receive audio call in information when you log-on to the webinar. This webinar will be recorded and made available for download.

Dispose of Prescription Drugs and Support the National Take-Back Initiative: April 28, 2012 | 10 a.m.—2 p.m. Local Time.

Got Drugs?

Prescription drugs are being misused and abused at alarming rates throughout the United States. As part of the effort to address this problem, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has scheduled the 4th National Prescription Take-Back Day to collect potentially dangerous expired, unused, and unwanted prescription drugs for destruction at sites nationwide.



This initiative addresses a vital public safety and health issue. Many Americans are not aware that unused or expired medicines are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. Rates of prescription drug abuse in the United States are increasing at alarming rates, as are the number of accidental poisonings and overdoses due to abuse of these drugs. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet.

[Learn More and View Take-Back Locations](#)

Region 10 Spotlight on a State: Washington

On Friday, March 23, 2012, I attended Governor Gregoire's signing of [E2SHB 2319](#) – the Washington State Health Benefit Exchange bill, furthering state implementation of the health benefit exchange and related provisions of the Affordable Care Act. The bill signing marked the two year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act.

Also attending the signing were Senator Karen Keiser, who sponsored legislation in the Senate, Representative Eileen Cody, who sponsored legislation in the House, Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler, and approximately 150 representatives of health organizations and stakeholder groups.

In 2011, the Washington State Health Care Authority was awarded a \$22 million Health Insurance Exchange Establishment Grant. The funds are being used to develop options and recommendations on policy decisions that will have a significant impact on the Exchange. The grant will also provide funds to develop a health information technology system that will support the Exchange.

On April 3, 2012, the Obama administration awarded \$72 million to 10 states to establish or expand home visitation programs for pregnant women, parents, caregivers and children under the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program under the Affordable Care Act. The Washington State Department of Early Learning was [awarded \\$6.6 million](#).

For HHS funding resources, please visit the [HHS Grants/Funding site](#) or [FYI: Minority Resources...Money & More](#), a newsletter published by the Office of Minority Health Resource Center.

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? Please contact me at susan.johnson@hhs.gov or 206-615-2010.