



June 15, 2022

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to initiate a virtual rapid-response Tribal Consultation and Urban Confer on the NIH IMPROVE Initiative Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence, to be held **Thursday, June 30, 2022, from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET**. I encourage you to participate in this timely discussion to help ensure input representing American Indians and Alaska Natives on this critical effort to improve maternal health.

Led by the NIH *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) – in partnership with NIH’s Office of Research on Women’s Health and Office of the Director – we seek to expand the existing agency-wide program known as Implementing a Maternal health and Pregnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE), which focuses on reducing preventable causes of maternal deaths and improving health for women before, during, and after delivery. NIH has the opportunity to launch Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence because Congress recently passed a FY 2022 appropriations bill that includes \$30 million for the IMPROVE initiative and the Centers. There is a short timeline to develop and publish a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) in FY 2022 to spend the funds in FY 2023.

NIH’s maternal health research has important implications for American Indians and Alaska Natives. We are committed to collaborating with Tribal Nations to address community priorities and needs and build upon existing strengths.

**Participant information:**

**What:** NIH Tribal Consultation on the Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence

**Date:** Thursday, June 30, 2022

**Time:** 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

**Join:** <https://nih.zoomgov.com/j/1606240175>

**Some questions to consider:**

- How can the goals and objectives of the Centers of Excellence be inclusive of the needs of tribal communities?
- Are there research priorities or types/areas of research, e.g., culturally-based practices, that should be included to specifically address the needs of expectant mothers and their families in tribal communities?

- How can we better encourage and facilitate research partnerships with tribal communities on maternal health topics?
- What special considerations for tribes should be in place as we develop funding opportunities?
- How should the data hub for the Centers of Excellence be established to incorporate and sustain tribal sovereignty for data collected and stored?

For technical meeting questions related to connectivity or audio/visual, please contact Elizabeth Cushman at [Cushman\\_Elizabeth@bah.com](mailto:Cushman_Elizabeth@bah.com).

If you are unable to attend, you are encouraged to send any written testimony, comments, and questions to [NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov](mailto:NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov) **by July 16, 2022**. For more information, please contact Dr. David Wilson, director of the NIH Tribal Health Research Office (THRO), at [NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov](mailto:NIHTribalConsultation@nih.gov).

Thank you for your continued partnership as we work together to improve the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives through research.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Diana W. Bianchi" followed by a small flourish.

Diana W. Bianchi, M.D.

Director, *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
Co-chair, IMPROVE Initiative

On behalf of fellow IMPROVE co-chairs:

Dr. Courtney Aklin, Ph.D., NIH Acting Associate Deputy Director

Dr. Janine Clayton, M.D., Director, NIH Office of Research on Women's Health