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The U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development today reaffirmed a commitment to improve housing conditions for Indians with the signing of an Agreement of Cooperation. It calls for development of a manual of Federal housing and related programs to spur Indian use of Federal housing aid.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs and HUD are operating jointly under a five-year plan to provide 6,000 dwellings a year for Indians.

Today's agreement, signed by Interior Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton and HUD Secretary George Romney clears the way for a major tool designed to acquaint tribal councils, housing authorities, groups and individuals interested in housing for Indians with HUD and other Federal housing and related Programs available to American Indians.

Planned for use by laymen and professionals, the manual will be prepared under a $40,000 contract funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and awarded to the Washington, D.C.-based Non-Profit Housing Center.

It will contain a brief summary of all relevant programs, indicating their nature, statutory basis, qualifications for assistance, and Federal officials at the National, State, or local levels administering each program.

Instructions for making application for assistance will also be provided.

Recalling the spirit and terms of the original agreement, both Secretaries viewed the new agreement as "a forging ahead" with efforts to reach the five year goals agreed upon two years ago.

Commenting on the agreement, Secretary Romney said: "We at HUD feel that today's signing and the follow-through of both Departments on the original agreement are, indeed, meaningful efforts to stem deplorable housing conditions among many Indian groups."

Secretary Morton said, "A decent, comfortable, and warm home is basic to life itself. Housing in some American Indian communities is so inadequate that spiritual and physical well-being is jeopardized. About 45,000 Indian families live in dwellings that do not meet either health or safety standards. One cannot emerge from the destructive force of poverty without decent housing.

"Interior," he said, "is committed to assuring Indians that by the end of this decade all Indian reservation families will have proper housing.

"The major financial support will come from HUD. Without our goal will be only a dream. In behalf of Indian Americans I wish to thank Secretary Romney for making reality of the dream." HUD's help