# BIA announces important updates to Housing Improvement Program as part of Tiwahe Initiative to help secure housing for families in need and participation in Interagency MOU to address homelessness and overcrowding

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**WASHINGTON**, D.C. – As part of the 7th Annual Tribal Nation's Conference, the White House announced yesterday an Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for setting a Path to End Homelessness in Native American communities. In support of that interagency effort, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has finalized updates to regulations on the Housing Improvement Program (HIP), as an important part of the Obama Administration's Tiwahe initiative, which is designed to promote the stability and security of American Indian families. The HIP is a safety net program that provides grants for repairing, renovating, or replacing existing housing and for providing new housing to Indian families. The BIA's Office of Indian Services Division of Human Services administers the HIP program.

"The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Housing Improvement Program final rule takes into account the comments we received to make the program more effective in increasing housing in tribal communities, which is an important goal of the Tiwahe Initiative to support families in Indian Country," said Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn. "I'm also pleased that the final rule goes further in supporting the housing needs of our Native veterans, who have long served to protect their tribal homelands and the nation, and supports President Obama's initiative seeking to end homelessness in Indian Country."

In support of the Tiwahe initiative, the final rule increases the number of families served by increasing the funding limits for repairs and renovations to reflect current pricing. The rule also allows families to leverage the funding they receive by providing assistance toward the purchase of a modest house for families that can obtain a mortgage loan from other federal programs.

The Interagency MOU for setting a Path to End Homelessness commits the participating agencies, which include Interior, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs (VA), Education (ED), Labor (DOL) and Agriculture (USDA), along with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to work together to improve housing and services through Administrative action. The MOU also requires the USICH Interagency Working Group on Homelessness among American Indians and Alaska Natives to develop an action plan for implementation, providing guidance on ongoing collaborations that will build a foundation for longer-term work.

By entering into the MOU, participating agencies agree to work together to consult with tribal leaders and urban Native American programs on four key areas:

1. Improving access to housing and services for American Indians and Alaska Natives through

Administrative action where possible;
2. Improving data collection on American Indian and Alaska Native homelessness;
3. Ensuring federal strategies and actions to set a path to end American Indian and Alaska Native homelessness are informed by consultation and engagement with tribal leaders, urban Native communities, and experts in the field; and
4. Elevating the awareness of the crisis of homelessness and housing instability among American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Also announced at the White House Tribal Nations Conference was the launch of Native One Stop, a website for American Indians and Alaska Natives to locate resources they are eligible for in 17 federal agencies.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the BIA, which is headed by a director who is responsible for managing day-to-day operations through four offices – Indian Services, Justice Services, Trust Services and Field Operations. These offices directly administer or fund tribally based infrastructure, law enforcement, social services, tribal governance, natural and energy resources, and trust management programs for the nation's federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages through 12 regional offices and 81 agencies.

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