Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The joint Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service (IHS) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) listening sessions for tribes on suicide prevention that began this month will continue through December and into early February of 2011. The sessions seek input from tribal leaders on how the agencies can effectively work within their communities to prevent suicide, and will lead up to a national conference on the topic early next year.

"American Indians and Alaska Natives have a suicide rate that is 72 percent higher than the general U.S. population," said Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk. "We need to better understand the causes of suicide and find ways to turn the tide on this terrible tragedy within Indian Country. I want to thank IHS and SAMHSA for working with us in this effort, and to encourage tribal leaders to attend these very important listening sessions."

A joint letter from Echo Hawk, IHS Director Yvette Roubideaux and SAMHSA Administrator Pamela Hyde was sent in mid-November to tribal leaders announcing the listening sessions and the national conference.

The listening sessions, which are being held in each Indian Affairs region, will help the agencies gather first-hand information on suicide prevention needs, concerns, programs and practices from community members. Input from the sessions will shape the agenda and goals for a national conference on suicide prevention in Indian Country, which will provide an opportunity for the Interior Department, DHHS and tribal leaders to develop strategies and best practices for suicide prevention and intervention in American Indian and Alaska Native tribal communities.

Sessions have already been held in the following locations: Navajo Region, Window Rock, Ariz. (Nov. 15); Midwest Region, Prior Lake, Minn. (Nov. 19) and Rocky Mountain Region, Billings, Mont. (Nov. 23).

Listed below is the schedule of the remaining sessions (all times are local time):

Alaska Region

Date: Tuesday, November 30, 2010

Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Egan Convention Center, 555 West 5th Ave., Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Great Plains Region

Date: Thursday, December 2, 2010

Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Best Western Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center, 2111 N. LaCrosse St., Rapid City, D.C.

57701

Eastern Oklahoma and Southern Plains Regions

Date: Monday, December 13, 2010 Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Embassy Suites – Meridian, 1815 South Meridian, Oklahoma City, Okla. 73108

Pacific Region

Date: Tuesday, December 21, 2010 Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Federal Building, Cottage Conference Rm., 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, Calif. 95825

Southwest Region

Date: Monday, January 10, 2011

Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: National Indian Programs Training Center (NIPTC), 1011 Indian School Rd., N.W., Albuquerque, N.M. 87104

Northwest Region

Date: Wednesday, January 12, 2011

Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northwest Regional Office, 911 Federal Building Auditorium, 911 N.E. 11th Ave., Portland, Ore. 97232

Eastern Region

Date: Thursday, February 10, 2011

Times: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Conference, Marriott Crystal Gateway, 1700 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, Va. 22202

To view the November 12, 2010, letter to tribal leaders visit the Indian Affairs website at http://www.indianaffairs.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/Consultation/index.htm.