



TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION
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O'ODHAM HA-WE:HEJED
"For the People"

Press Release

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Tohono O'odham Nation Legislative Council Votes to Accept Health Care Self-Governance Compact

SELLS, Ariz. — Yesterday, the Tohono O'odham Nation Legislative Council took the historic step of approving the Self-Governance Agreement for healthcare on the Nation. With this exercise of tribal sovereignty, the Nation will assume responsibility for the provision of quality health care services for tribal members and can now do more with the resources it has available.

This action was taken after a great deal of planning and preparation. For more than a year, the Nation's Department of Health and Human Services has been working to contract all healthcare programs, services, functions, and activities currently being provided by the Indian Health Services (IHS) Tucson Area and the Sells Service Unit. The Legislative Council passed a resolution last September that authorized the Nation to work on the extensive compact that finalizes this careful process.

"After many months of work with our Self-Governance Team of the Nation and intense negotiations with IHS, we are ecstatic that the Legislative Council passed the Health Compact that now clears the way for the Nation to assume responsibility for its own healthcare," said Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Edward Manuel.

Chairman Manuel went on to say, "This was a collective effort—from our Executive staff, Legislative staff, District Councils, to the members of the Tohono O'odham Legislative Council—everyone working to do their duty. Health is a major priority for the Tohono O'odham Nation. This action makes it clear that we are ready to improve our healthcare delivery system and do more for our people."

In taking this step, the Nation is making use of a long-standing federal program used by many other tribal governments. In 1975, Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638) empowering tribes to pursue self-governance and contracting of federal programs. The IHS Tribal Self-Governance Program includes the participation of 353 of the 567 federally recognized tribes, which have negotiated 89 compacts and 114 funding agreements under the authority of Title V of the Act.

The Tohono O'odham Nation's Self-Governance Team will now begin working with the IHS Tucson Area Office to initiate assuming full responsibility on July 1st, 2016.

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