The goal of the Office of Public Health is to provide consultative and technical support to tribes and nations to improve the health of Native Americans.

Please contact our office if you have questions on any of the health focuses:

- GPRA
- Oral Health
- Depression
- Contract Health Services
- Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence
- Elder Care
- Electronic Health Record
- Health Promotion/Disease Prevention
- Childhood Obesity
- Health Education
- Substance Abuse
- Tobacco Cessation

For more information on the Nashville Area Indian Health Service, please visit our website:

http://www.ihs.gov/FacilitiesServices/AreaOffices/Nashville/
**Why Oral Health Matters**

In 2000, the Surgeon General of the U.S. published the first-ever “Report on Oral Health.” In this report, the Surgeon General acknowledged a profound fact that “oral health is integral to overall health.” In addition, the report states that members of certain racial or ethnic groups, including Native Americans, “experience a disproportionate level of oral health problems.”

The 1999 Indian Health Service Oral Health Survey pointed out some of the disparities in oral health status of American Indian/Alaska Native people compared to the general U.S. population. For example, in children between the ages of 2-5 years, Native American children have more than 5 times the number of decayed teeth as compared to the general U.S. population, and in adults between the ages of 35-44 years, 16.2% of Native Americans examined in the IHS survey had periodontal disease as compared to less than 3% in the general U.S. population.

But why is good oral health important to overall health? The answers may be surprising. Studies have shown that children suffering from tooth decay are more likely to have missed school days, perform poorer in school, and have problems with self-esteem and social development. With periodontal (gum) disease, new research has shown links or associations between the development of periodontal disease and more significant health problems such as cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes control, and delivery of pre-term, low birth weight babies.

One only needs to realize that the mouth is the “portal” or entry into the body, so if the teeth and gums are not healthy, the body cannot be or remain healthy.

**ORAL HEALTH = OVERALL HEALTH**

**GPRA Objectives**

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requires Federal agencies to demonstrate that they are using their funds effectively toward meeting their missions. More importantly, however, GPRA helps provide a snapshot of the quality of care provided to patients. Currently, there are three GPRA indicators related to oral health:

- **Topical fluoride applications.** The professional application of fluoride is an accepted and largely successful tooth decay preventive procedures that is appropriate for children, adolescents, and adults.

  **Fluoride Applications in the Nashville Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>5182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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- **Dental sealants.** Dental sealants are a proven method of reducing the incidence of tooth decay, and can be applied by dentists as well as dental auxiliaries (assistants).

  **Sealants in the Nashville Area**

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