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(S.D.)-Agreement Boosts Access For American Indian Vets

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 12/07/2012 08:09 AM

WASHINGTON (AP) - Native American military veterans will be able to access health care closer to home thanks to an agreement between the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and the Indian Health Service.

The agreement allows for Veterans Affairs to reimburse IHS for direct health care services provided to eligible American Indian and Alaska Native veterans.

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius first announced plans for the new partnership during Wednesday's tribal summit.

Veterans Affairs and IHS released more details Thursday, saying the agreement stemmed from much work among the agencies and tribal governments as they tried to find a more equitable solution for bolstering access to care for veterans, particularly those in rural areas.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki says the VA is committed to expanding access to Native veterans "with the full range of VA programs, as earned by their service to our nation."

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