



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JUL 18 2019

Dear Tribal Leader:

The purpose of this letter is to provide information regarding the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) national Welfare Assistance Funding Distribution Methodology (methodology) and the final distribution of Welfare Assistance funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, as recommended by the Office of Inspector General Report: WR-EV-001-2012: Management of Social Services in BIA, Opportunity for Action.

The BIA distributes Welfare Assistance funding to Tribes and BIA agencies based on an approved methodology. The methodology determines funding levels each FY for BIA agencies and Tribes operating the Welfare Assistance Program under Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) Title I Contracts, ISDEAA Title IV Self-Governance Funding Agreements, and Public Law (Pub. L.) 102-477 Plans. The methodology is intended to facilitate fair and equitable treatment of potential recipients of Welfare Assistance funds and to avoid the closure of one or more Welfare Assistance programs.

The methodology is located on the BIA website in the Indian Affairs Manual (IAM) Part 70, Chapter 3 at the following URL:

[https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/raca/manual/pdf/70%20IAM%203%20FAS SR_SIGNED%2012.14.17_with%20footer_508compliant_0.pdf](https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/raca/manual/pdf/70%20IAM%203%20FAS%20SR_SIGNED%2012.14.17_with%20footer_508compliant_0.pdf)

On October 1, 2018, the BIA used actual expenditures reported in the end-of-year 2017 Financial Assistance and Social Services Reports (FASSRs), adjusted for carryover, to calculate the 2019 estimated program funding for each Tribe and BIA agency. The estimate is based on actual prior year expenditures reported on the FASSRs (which would be two years before the current year), subject to carryover adjustments and fixed amounts for approved Tribal Redesign Plans for General Assistance consistent with 25 C.F.R. §20.202 to §20.210. In FY 2019, the BIA provided funding based on each Tribe or BIA agency's 2019 estimate within the limitations of Congressional funding. At the beginning of FY 2019, Congress enacted a Continuing Resolution, H.R. 6157, Pub. L. 115-245, Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2019. The BIA distributed Welfare Assistance funding by prorating available funding to stay within the capped Welfare Assistance appropriation enacted by Congress.

The final distribution of Welfare Assistance funding in FY 2019 is based on actual expenditures reported on certified 2018 FASSRs. For FY 2019, based on the data submitted by Tribes and BIA agencies on 2018 FASSRs, the BIA plans to distribute \$76.0 million in appropriated funding.

In FY 2019, the BIA received \$76 million in Welfare Assistance funding, an increase from the FY 2017 enacted level of \$74.6 million. Tribal and BIA agency programs must operate their Welfare Assistance program within limits outlined in the appropriations language and the regulations governing the program published at 25 C.F.R. Part 20. Welfare Assistance program funding is a secondary or residual resource, and must not be used to supplement or supplant funding for other programs. All Tribes and BIA Agencies should carefully monitor their expenditures and coordinate with their local Tribal governments and state programs to leverage resources.

Tribes and BIA agencies are advised to provide as much notice as possible to their community members when funding for the Welfare Assistance program is exhausted. Once a BIA agency or Tribe exhausts all of its FY 2019 Welfare Assistance funding (and for the Tribe also TPA funds available for use), it must deny any later applications for services and cease providing Welfare Assistance payments to eligible clients in FY 2019. Additionally, Tribes and BIA agencies are not authorized under the appropriations act to use FY 2019 funds to back pay for FY 2018 Welfare Assistance expenses. In addition, the Disaster Assistance and Tribal Work Experience programs continue to be unfunded and welfare assistance funds are not authorized to be used for these program line items.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Evangeline Campbell, Chief, Division of Human Services, at (202) 513-7642 or via email: evangeline.campbell@bia.gov.

Sincerely,



Tara Sweeney

Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs