Three Tribes in New England and Their Health Programs Did Not Conduct Required Background Investigations on All Individuals in Contact With Indian Children

What OIG Found
The three Tribes and their health programs did not comply with Federal and Tribal requirements for performing background investigations on 65 employees, 12 contractors, and 1 volunteer in contact with Indian children. Specifically, the three Tribes did not conduct FBI fingerprint background investigations and compare the results to the required character standards for individuals in contact with Indian children. Indian Health Service (IHS) officials stated that they recalled providing background investigation training prior to 2015 but could not produce documentation to support their recollections. Despite the training that IHS officials informed us about, current Tribal officials said they were not aware of, or misinterpreted, their obligations under the Act. Because the three Tribes and their health programs did not always collect the necessary employment information and did not conduct the required criminal history investigations, they could not compare complete criminal history results to the minimum standards of character for individuals in contact with Indian children. As a result, Indian children faced an increased risk of harm.

What OIG Recommends and Auditee Comments
We recommend that the three Tribes: (1) perform background investigations, as required by the Act, on individuals who currently have contact with Indian children; and (2) develop and implement policies and procedures to ensure that each Tribe conducts required background investigations and assesses results to verify that applicants meet the required minimum character standards. We also recommend that IHS provide additional training and technical assistance to help Tribes comply with the background investigation and character assessment requirements of the Act.

In written comments on our draft report, two of the Tribes concurred with our findings and the third generally concurred with our findings. All three Tribes indicated that they had taken steps to implement or were in the process of implementing procedures to perform background investigations, as required by the Act, on individuals who are in contact with Indian children. In addition, IHS concurred with our recommendations and outlined the steps it would take to help Tribes comply with the requirements.

The full report can be found at https://oig.hhs.gov/oas/reports/region1/12001504.asp.