

## 2022 Division of Nursing Services Nurse of the Month: May

San Diego American Indian Health Center (SDAIHC)'s leadership is honored to nominate **Dean Cremat, RN, PHN, BSN and Behavioral Health Case Manager**, for recognition as IHS Nurse of the Month. Nurse Cremat came to SDAIHC at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. He initially joined our staff as a key member of our Covid-19 response team, overseeing one of two IHS-funded testing and vaccination outreach vans. In that capacity, Dean brought SDAIHC care to sites throughout San Diego County—from public schools, to homeless encampments, to elder housing facilities where we have concentrations of AI/AN clients. He also helped lead our daily outdoor testing tents and later our mass vaccination clinics for urban Indians and other community members. Dean's daily hard work, in concert with the entire Covid-19 response team, paid off. This past year, the Health Resources and Services Administration recognized SDAIHC as being among the *top 10% of community clinics nationwide* in providing community-based Covid-19 testing—with Dean's team delivering 5,868 Covid-19 rapid tests.

In mid-2021, Nurse Cremat volunteered to temporarily lead our IHS-funded Public Health Nursing program after our former PHN suffered from a life-threatening illness. When the PHN had to go on permanent disability, Dean assumed full leadership of the program—never missing a beat, during the height of a pandemic. He implemented creative solutions, like enabling PHN home visitation using Android tablets and telehealth, to ensure that needed services were never disrupted. As it became clear that SDAIHC was witnessing a doubling of demand for behavioral health services due to the pandemic, Dean initiated a pilot program, coordinating with our entire BH team as well as our Medical, Dental, Informatics, and Youth Center leadership, to ensure that the evolving crisis would not overwhelm our care system.

Under this pilot, SDAIHC began screening ALL clients with the PHQ-2 depression screening tool at *every* visit, and at *every* location. During the pilot, *every client* who showed risk on the PHQ-2 was given a warm handoff to Nurse Cremat, who then conducted a universal screening on every at-risk patient. The Universal Screen includes the PHQ-9 (depression), CSSR-S (suicide risk), ACES (adverse childhood experiences), AUDIT-C (alcohol), Domestic Violence, Substance Use, and Food Insecurity screening. Using this approach, Dean established handoffs to service tiers from SBIRT at the "low risk" end, to talking circles and cultural supports, to brief therapy combined with supports from talking circles and the PHN's Resource Center, to Assertive Community Therapy-Intensive Case Management, combined with intensive therapy, inpatient detoxification and treatment, and other advanced supports, as indicated. Dean maintains a full caseload of 15-17 Native American clients in ACT-ICM at any given moment, and he conducts regular Universal Re-screening of clients to track each client's progress.

Nurse Cremat's pilot project for ensuring that all AI/AN clients with behavioral health needs are identified and served at the *earliest possible moment* was so successful that it has now become our clinic's standard of care. Our behavioral health intake system was completely reengineered because of his hard work and success. In the past year, 19,182 PHQ-2 screenings were conducted at SDAIHC. Over the past 9 months, (since this process became our care standard) 459 clients were found at-risk on the Universal Screening with 90% requiring the two highest service tiers. 369 were given a warm handoff to Behavioral Health for brief or longer-term therapy and/or SUD/AOD care. 121 Native Americans were connected to cultural supports (including White Bison / Generation Red Road talking circles, and social supports like our Dancing for Healing program, our Tonkwa program for Elders, or our Good Medicine Youth Center Prevention/Early Intervention program). Dean oriented more than 500 individuals to the supports in our PHN Resource Center and offered ACT-Intensive Case Management to our most-at-risk Native clients, bringing personal guidance and care to each person's wellness journey. Dean Cremat is an inspiration to our entire staff and a Registered Nurse/PHN of the highest caliber. We are honored to nominate him for recognition by IHS, whose mission he has served tirelessly since he came to SDAIHC.