



## Making a Difference

The IHS Office of Public Health Support (OPHS) presents the second in its series of Retention Briefs designed to help address the challenge of retaining professional and clinical staff within an Indian health facility. We encourage you to review these cases and to discuss with the leadership team (administration, clinical directors, other leaders, etc.) how you can implement these practices when faced with similar challenges.

This issue is focused on the type of relationship the leadership team can intentionally build with staff members. A successful relationship depends on how you personally present yourself to employees, as well as how well information is shared at every level and how enthusiastically employees are given the ability to help manage issues that will eventually help you to achieve long-term employee retention.

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## Best Practices

### LEADERSHIP

***Set the Standard*** — A true “servant” leader knows how important it is to empower his or her staff. Unlike self-serving leadership, in which a manager looks out for one’s self, one’s job and one’s own success, the foundation for servant leadership is a team approach. Involve clinicians and staff in all decision making, from how budgets are spent to determining how effectively everyone works together and to how well the organization fits into the surrounding community. And set the right agenda — one that demonstrates to every staff member that they are the heart and soul of the organization. You can do this by outwardly showing your support for them and the facility every day and by creating an environment where they can do more than just practice their profession — they can achieve the agency’s mission and their own personal goals and objectives.

### COMMUNICATION

***Everyone Has an Idea That Can Make a Difference*** — Use the collective depth of knowledge of the facility staff in making all decisions rather than managing solely from your own knowledge base. Establish an open, regularly scheduled meeting to talk about issues. This can involve meeting with the medical staff leadership on a routine basis where the divisions, including the clinical services staff, are invited to sit down with the CEO. You can further interact with them through management, administrative and support resources. It’s an excellent opportunity to hear from staff members and provide them feedback on what’s happening within your organization (budget, policy, human resources, etc.).

### SHARED MANAGEMENT

***Let Others Lead*** — Your professional staff has a voice. Take advantage of it. Give them the flexibility to set the agenda. This will provide them with a sense of ownership in the organization, as well as the care of the patients they serve. When you involve your staff in leadership roles, they will gain the ability and opportunity to influence the future of the facility. You can help to guide them by encouraging them to share their knowledge. Doing so will enhance their decision making ability by offering an opportunity to learn how to address limitations or challenges they may face.

### “RECRUITENTION”

***Onboarding for the Long Term*** — A focus on retaining good employees begins before they’re hired. It starts at the interview, by bringing in qualified people who fit into the culture and interact well with current staff. Use this time to introduce them to and involve them with the community to learn about the culture, heritage and traditions of the Tribes they will serve. This will allow them time to recognize if this is the right fit for the community, the job and themselves. Make every effort to avoid hiring someone you sense will leave after a short period of time. By providing the right fit, you can ensure continuity of care for your patients for the long term.