



## Making the Most of your Resources

The IHS Office of Public Health Support (OPHS) presents the fourth 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.

The focus of this issue is on making the most of your resources. Whether you're acting quickly on an issue to ensure that it won't escalate into a bigger problem, using your location to inspire potential staff members to join your team or spending your budget strategically, your ability to maximize what is readily available to you can be a very effective employee retention tool.

*“ Don't underestimate  
the unique setting  
of your facility. ”*

## Best Practices

### TIMELY COMMUNICATION

*Timing is Everything* – When you communicate is just as important as how you communicate. It's critical for your communications to be timely. If a situation arises that requires your attention, deal with it immediately. If you receive a request, follow up on it. When you receive an email, respond to it. If you don't acknowledge and pursue situations as they occur, you may in time create a larger problem that ultimately requires much more of your energy and attention. For example, if you receive a request from a candidate who is interested in a medical staff position at another facility, respond immediately, even if it means you may lose him or her. The staff member will appreciate your cooperation and support and, in the long run, if he or she chooses to leave, your efforts on his or her behalf will be appreciated. What's more, your interest in furthering the employee's career within the Indian health system is an investment in the future.

### SHARED MANAGEMENT

*Support From the Top is Critical* – In order to successfully implement initiatives, policies or procedures, support from the entire executive leadership team is needed. This may be accomplished by establishing an open forum for executive leaders to meet, discuss and agree on upcoming changes or decisions. Following this step, it is essential to gain the support of all clinical and medical staff. Make sure that information is provided accurately throughout the process – good communication on all levels from the top down will ensure a fuller understanding.

### “RECRUITMENT”

*Leverage Your Location* – Don't underestimate the unique setting of your facility. A beautiful vista or lush prairie may be one of the reasons why your current employees applied. By appealing to those who appreciate an active, outdoors lifestyle, you can leverage your location and the community. Most Indian health facilities are located in remote locations, but they often are in close proximity to some of the country's most scenic natural landmarks where there's plenty of opportunity for recreational pursuits. You're in a unique position to play up the innate remoteness and beauty as a selling point for new hires and any professionals looking for clinical experience. Let current and potential hires know that a career in Indian health offers both professional and personal fulfillment.

### ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*You Have to Spend to Save* – Promoting opportunities for continuing education (CE) is a key factor in retaining valuable employees. Consider it a cost of doing business – CE and other training opportunities enhance staff performance, morale and retention. An educated staff will stay on board. And that's great news for you – A 2011 *AARP Magazine* survey reported that “...replacing an experienced worker at any age can cost 50 percent or more of the individual's annual salary in turnover-related costs, with increased costs for jobs requiring specialized skills, advanced training or extensive experience.” So when you're investing a couple thousand dollars a year in employees, you're actually potentially saving a couple hundred thousand dollars a year in replacing them should they leave. Plan your budget at the beginning of the year to include adequate ongoing training for your staff. It's definitely an investment worth making.