



## Taking the Next Step

The IHS Office of Public Health Support presents the final Retention Brief in this series designed to help you address the challenge of retaining health professionals and clinical staff.

Thank you for your support and interest in the IHS Retention Brief series. These Best Practice Retention Case Studies are printed as an insert for inclusion in the Indian Health Retention Toolkit. The Indian Health Retention Toolkit presents valuable information that will help you address the challenges of retaining professional and clinical staff.

In this final issue, a CEO helps a promising nurse director take the steps toward a CEO position, thus retaining her within the Indian health system and her service unit. This case highlights the *best practices of career development and communication.*

*“ Helping individuals reach their potential is important, even if they outgrow the facility or reach a higher position than the leader. ”*

## Case Study

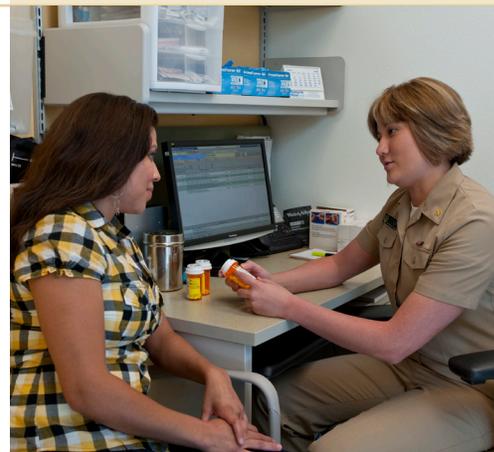
Chief Executive Officer | Mid-Sized Rural Service Unit

**Background:** A nursing director had been with her rural service unit for 13 years. During that time, she had earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree and had become a Commissioned Corps officer. With her children grown, she was now ready to further her personal and professional aspirations through the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP). The CEO of the service unit worked with the nursing director to ensure that she was nominated for and accepted into the ELDP program. While in the program, the nursing director became aware of another director of nursing position at a larger hospital outside of the service unit and she indicated a desire to pursue it.

**Challenge:** While the facility's CEO didn't have an appropriate opening for the nursing director within the service unit at that time, he wanted to continue to support her and encourage her to stay within the Indian health system and the local Area if possible.

**Solution:** Meanwhile, another service unit within the Area posted a vacancy for a CEO. The nursing director's CEO recommended that she apply for the position, even though it would mean more responsibility. As it turned out, the facility also needed a deputy CEO, a position for which the nursing director was better suited. She applied, was hired and eventually moved up to the CEO role.

**Lessons Learned:** Succession planning does not play favorites, but it does support committed staff members who have contributed enormously to the success of the system, its patients and the quality care provided. Helping individuals reach their potential is important, even if they outgrow the facility or reach a higher position than the leader. It is the responsibility of a leader to make opportunities work toward the employees' best interests under any circumstances.



## Best Practices in Action

A supportive leader identifies an individual's drive and commitment to improve and then finds ways to provide that person with career development opportunities, such as additional training, a new position or by suggesting a new, more suitable assignment.

When you gain staff member trust, you must honor it by being realistic about their potential opportunities and introducing them to people who can help. You can achieve this by maintaining good communication with other facilities in the area about top performing employees, including spreading the word about a staffer who has great potential and wants a new challenge.