



Indian Health Service Press Release

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Indian Health Service Increases Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Support During World Alzheimer's Month

The Indian Health Service has awarded nearly \$2 million through 10 cooperative agreements to expand Alzheimer's disease and dementia care in tribal and urban Indian health systems. The additional investment, totaling more than \$5.9 million over three years, increases the number of communities receiving funding to 16. The announcement comes during World Alzheimer's Month and will help health programs build stronger, community-led models of care rooted in cultural values.

"Alzheimer's doesn't only affect memories. It can slowly take a person's identity, leaving families to witness painful changes," said Acting IHS Director Benjamin Smith. "Today's investment is about more than funding; it's about support, dignity, and honoring our elders."

The number of tribes and organizations seeking funding has grown each year. From 2022 to 2025, there was a five-fold increase, showing an increased awareness and need across American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This growth reflects both the urgency of early detection and the success of previous IHS-funded projects and activities to conduct outreach and raise awareness.

This year's awardees have responded with innovative, sustainable programs that include early screening and detection, patient and caregiver education, community outreach, and care coordination that is tailored to the needs of the tribal communities they serve. Awardees include four new recipients and six returning awardees from previous rounds of funding:

- **Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma (Oklahoma) – \$200,000** – One of the first culturally adapted dementia care models in the country will blend Shawnee healing traditions with modern medicine. More than 400 health workers will be trained to improve early diagnoses, reduce diagnosis delays, and build a model other tribes can use nationwide.
- **Central Oklahoma American Indian Health Council, Inc. (Oklahoma) – \$200,000** – A comprehensive, culturally sensitive dementia care program will include additional screening tools, team-based assessments, and partnerships. It is being designed to deliver earlier diagnoses, stronger caregiver support, and a new national standard for dementia care in tribal communities.

- **Cherokee Nation (Oklahoma) – \$200,000** – Expanded dementia care will offer a comprehensive support model that includes awareness, early recognition, accurate diagnosis, coordinated management, and caregiver support. New patient navigator and nurse case manager positions will guide families, improve outcomes, and increase dementia awareness across the Cherokee Nation.
- **Chickahominy Indian Tribe (Virginia) – \$168,030** – The *Weaving Pathways of Care* initiative will hire a brain health navigator to guide families, link them with needed services, and track care through a new case management system. Goals include improved brain health awareness, more screenings, expanded access to services, and stronger care coordination to enhance quality of life and build a sustainable system of support.
- **Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon (Oregon) – \$198,603** – Dementia care across six counties will expand to include wellness education, home-based screenings, culturally tailored care plans, and integrated dementia services. A “Caregiver Champion” mentorship network will train both family and professional caregivers, creating stronger support for elders and their families.
- **Denver Indian Health and Family Services (Colorado) – \$200,000** – Colorado’s only urban Indian health program will strengthen dementia care by raising awareness, expanding early detection, and training staff in advanced dementia care. Its teams will support families through assessments, medication management, behavioral health services, and caregiver resources.
- **Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe (Nevada) – \$184,996** – Guided by a Dementia Care Steering Committee, a new project will assess dementia rates, identify service gaps, and expand culturally based care practices. Screenings, care planning, caregiver support, and home safety checks will be added, and electronic health records will be used to improve outcomes and reduce emergency visits.
- **First Nations Community Health Source (New Mexico) – \$200,000** – A three-year dementia screening project will provide culturally sensitive memory screenings, workshops, and assessments, along with outreach and training. Case management will connect families to social services such as housing, transportation, and nutrition support, while tracking progress to improve care over time.
- **Norton Sound Health Corporation (Alaska) – \$200,000** – Dementia services will be expanded across the Bering Straits region through additional screenings, education, and earlier diagnoses, ultimately addressing major gaps in care and in-home support. A new referral coordinator position will connect families to respite care and other services while strengthening partner collaboration.
- **Seattle Indian Health Board (Washington) – \$200,000** – An Indigenous Knowledge-informed dementia care initiative will blend traditional medicine with clinical services, adding screenings, community education, and tailored caregiver support. It will track improvements in screenings, care coordination, and caregiver well-being, and share lessons nationwide.

The awards support the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease](#) by improving quality of care, expanding family and caregiver support, and raising awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

There is a critical need for earlier, more accurate diagnosis and culturally responsive care, especially in tribal and urban Indian communities. These efforts reflect a shared commitment to ensuring that people living with dementia, and their families, have access to quality care and support that respects culture and community.

As the IHS Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Program partners with organizations to promote health initiatives and strengthen community-led models of care for Alzheimer's disease and dementia, it also continues to develop projects that support those on the front lines of care. In September, IHS released the [Dementia Care Pathway](#), a key resource designed to help providers deliver timely, person-centered care for American Indian and Alaska Native communities. This clinical tool assists health care professionals in identifying, diagnosing, and managing dementia while offering culturally appropriate guidance for use in IHS, tribal, and urban Indian health settings.

The Indian Health Service, an agency in the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to [574 federally recognized tribes](#) in 37 states. Follow the agency via social media on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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