

# Creating a Welcoming Facility **Fact Sheet**

## **CREATING A WELCOMING FACILITY FOR ELDER**

Service providers face a variety of challenges in meeting the needs of the aging population. One of these challenges is creating service delivery systems which consider the needs of a diverse population. As a portion of the Elder population, American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) are often overlooked and underserved. This is partially due to the lack of understanding of where they access services, but it's also due to the fact that many services available to AI/ANs historically have not been culturally competent in the delivery of care, and many urban programs fail to meet the unique cultural needs of the AI/AN Elder populations. To deliver quality service to AI/AN Elders, consideration for a variety of factors must be made.



### **RECOGNITION**

With some 78% of all AI/ANs living outside of Indian lands, the need to recognize AI/ANs in facilities both on and outside of tribal areas is increasingly important. This can be a challenge because it is not always obvious or readily apparent that a person identifies as AI/AN. Without recognizing an Elder as AI/AN, it is not possible to understand the differing worldviews Elders might have or the adversities faced throughout U.S. history (such as racism and many destructive U.S. Indian policies). In this present day we must ask, what should be done to deliver quality care now? **It is important to note that beliefs are not homogenous among AI/AN Elders**, as some may have deep traditional views and others may not. We also know that there are 566 federally-recognized tribes and others are waiting federal recognition. Language, beliefs and practices vary widely among these groups. (1)(2)(3)



### **INVOLVEMENT**

Care that is culturally competent requires the inclusion and participation of the care recipient. It is not always possible to truly provide quality care to an Elder without understanding who they are and where they come from. To ensure willing participation from an Elder, their family, and their community in delivering any type of service, (whether institutional or home and community-based), the involvement of the entire community in the development and delivery of care is critical. Involvement on a community level can help to identify the needs specific to the AI/AN population served by your facility. The needs of AI/AN populations vary in terms of the specific beliefs and care preferences and it is important for service providers to fully understand those needs and not make assumptions. (3)



## TAKING ACTION

Listening to the community and specific individuals in the service delivery system is as important as developing programs specific to AI/AN needs. The historical neglect of the unique needs of AI/ANs in the broader healthcare system has meant that many AI/AN Elders have experienced poor-quality healthcare and that **they may not be willing to trust a care provider that promises to hear their concerns but fails to act.** (3)

Taking action inclusively means including AI/ANs in the delivery of care. Members of an AI/AN Elder's community may be able to assist with the unique needs in a culturally-sensitive way that would otherwise not be possible for non-AI/ANs. Hiring qualified AI/ANs as staff and into administrative positions can lend a shared perspective between those designing, giving, and receiving care as well as create trust on an individual and community level. (1)(3)

Inclusivity can be demonstrated in a number of ways. One is by featuring AI/ANs in promotional and marketing materials. Recognizing traditional holidays and feast days, and participating in AI/AN community events (as appropriate) can help to create understanding, as will learning the appropriate ways to show respect toward Elders. Repeated efforts to reach out will help create a relationship of trust over time.

Another aspect to taking action is to direct AI/ANs to other resources in the community that can help. NICOA operates the Tribal Footprints Resource Directory that provides a listing of community resources by tribe and can be immensely helpful for service providers and AI/AN Elders who may not be aware of the resources that serve AI/AN Elders in their area.



## LEARN MORE

Developing a welcoming facility through culturally-competent care delivery is not an easy Process. NICOA has other resources to help, so give us a call at 505.292.2001 or visit [www.NICOA.org/resources](http://www.NICOA.org/resources) for factsheets on culturally-competent care & communication, AI/AN health disparities, and more.

## SOURCES

- 1) Lee, T. H. - Indian Country Today Media Network, <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/12/07/textbook-aims-revolutionize-nursing-care-native-americans-162597>
- 2) United States Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-10.pdf>
- 3) Price-Robertson, R. - Australian Institute of Family Studies, <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-indigenous-children-families-and-communities>