

## South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency

“Caregivers...may not recognize the support available to them, as that is how it has always been in tribal communities: family members taking care of family members.”

– Carmen Kalama, Director, Program Services, SPIPA

### Program Description

South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency (SPIPA) provides administrative support to a consortium of tribes by applying and managing budgets for Title VI, Part C funding. SPIPA works with the tribes' program staff (employed by the member tribes), to perform day-to-day services for their caregiver support programs. Working with the consortium's tribes, SPIPA has knowledge of the unique benefits and challenges to providing caregiver support in these tribal communities.

### Successful Strategies

SPIPA tribes have developed strategies to provide their communities with caregiver support services tailored to meet their unique needs. These strategies include forming local partnerships, providing training options for caregivers, and including cultural considerations in various aspects of service provision to the community.

### Partnership

SPIPA tribes work with local agencies to supplement their program efforts to provide support services to caregivers with access to resources, such as training, referrals, or equipment. Partner organizations and agencies include:

- Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

#### Operated by:

**Operating since:** 1976

**Location:** Shelton, WA

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**Website:** <http://www.spipa.org/>

**Community:** SPIPA is an intertribal, nonprofit organization serving the Chehalis, Nisqually, Shoalwater Bay, Skokomish, and Squaxin Island Tribes. SPIPA manages the Title VI, Part C grant for Nisqually and Shoalwater Bay's caregiver support program. The other three tribes in the consortium manage their own caregiver support programs.

## Cultural Considerations

The program quickly determined that caregivers often fail to seek out support services because they do not identify as caregivers. This lack of seeing oneself as a “caregiver” is due to the cultural norm of family caring for elders or family members with disabilities. In further consideration of culture, SPIPA:

- Has worked with its tribes to expand services to include elder care and caregiver support
- Encourages community use of caregiver support services, by advertising caregiver support services to focus on descriptions of caregiver activities—for example, saying “If you are caring for an elder...” is more effective than simply labeling something as a caregiver support service
- Recognizes that local, non-tribal organizations are valuable resources; however, they must show respect for tribal culture to be effective
- Recommends that outside organizations become familiar with the community and its culture, traditions, and values when working with individual tribes

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“I think that is why it is so important that the caregiver receives all the training and education that they can: to be able to continue caring for the elder in their home.”

– *Carmen Kalama, Director,  
Program Services, SPIPA*

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## Training

SPIPA tribes combine their own program services with other local resources to provide training to caregivers. AAAs provide monthly and quarterly trainings to caregivers in SPIPA tribes.

## Funding

SPIPA tribes can opt to apply for Title VI, Part C funding on their own. Two of the five SPIPA tribes have requested SPIPA to apply for the funding on their behalf. SPIPA has intertribal meetings to share information about grant opportunities. Further, SPIPA tribes often reach out to local and state programs to fund specific caregiver program services.

## Future Considerations

SPIPA would like to see growth in the capacity of tribal caregiver programs, by:

- Providing an environment for caregivers to share their experiences
- Increasing community awareness about caregiver needs
- Increasing training options for stress management and specialized skills
- Increasing caregivers’ access to education

This kind of capacity building can take place through identifying and connecting with surrounding tribes that already provide caregiver support services. SPIPA identifies services currently offered by tribal, local, regional, and national organizations, and networks or partners with them to provide needed services.