High rates of chronic disease\textsuperscript{1} A lack of care options in tribal communities Desire to receive care at home "You know, I want to go home. Take me home." But there was no place to go.

Program administrator, Tohono O'odham Nation

Caring for those nearing end-of-life: Providing compassion and dignity for our elders

The Need in Indian Country

Types of End-of-Life Care

Palliative care
- Designed to relieve symptoms from serious and life-limiting illnesses
- May be offered at the same time as treatment to cure illness
- Nursing care
- Home health services
- Pain management
- Advance care planning
- Medical social services
- Family and caregiver support
- Traditional medicine

Hospice care
- For terminally ill patients no longer seeking a cure
- Last 6 months of life
- Focuses on physical and emotional comfort
- In addition to palliative care, it often includes care for the dying and bereavement support

Where is end-of-life care provided?
- Homes
- Assisted living facilities
- Hospice facilities
- Hospitals

Who provides care?
- End-of-life care typically involves a team of people, including:
  - Family
  - Doctors
  - Traditional healers
  - Nurses
  - Social workers
  - Other health workers
  - Volunteers

Providing culturally sensitive end-of-life care to elders

Beliefs about death are sacred and personal, involving different customs, traditions, and religions. Programs designed by tribes can:

- Balance Medicare's hospice requirement of a prognosis of less than six months of life with cultural views discouraging planning for death
- Address pain and death in ways that are mentally and spiritually healing
- Help non-tribal medical professionals navigate language barriers, cultural beliefs about discussing death, appropriate behaviors regarding touch and eye contact

Tribal communities can successfully plan for end-of-life care

Successful strategies include:
- Seeking guidance from elders and tribal leaders
- Involving the community
- Educating family members
- Combining traditional end-of-life practices with Western medicine
- Developing and using culturally specific materials
- Educating non-tribal care providers

Create a hospice program in your community

Find resources on the LTSS Technical Assistance Center: http://go.cms.gov/aianltss
- Research and examples of tribal hospice and palliative care programs http://go.cms.gov/aianhpcare

Sources
\textsuperscript{1} Finke et al. 2004, Hampton 2005, Indian Health Service 2006, Kitzes 2003, Arenella et al. 2010