



# Staffing Shortages in Tribal Facilities: Past, Present, and Future

Keeping Our Elders Safe and Well Cared For  
July 28, 2021



# Disclaimer

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Uniting Nursing Homes In Tribal Excellence

# About UNITE

## UNITE (Uniting Nursing Homes in Tribal Excellence)

- Entering its 7th year of service to tribal nursing homes and tribal assisted living facilities
- Promotes evidence-based education and training, best practices, and quality improvement initiatives
- Works with any tribe desiring facility-based and/or home-based services for tribal elders to age in place



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# UNITE's mission, status, and location

## UNITE's mission

UNITE partners with Native Americans/Alaska Natives/Native Hawaiians to improve the quality of life of elders through the implementation of evidence-based practices and culturally relevant education and training

- 501(c)(3) with a board of directors
- Serving tribal elders since 2014
- Membership-based



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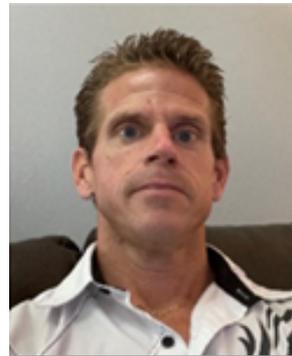
# Presenters



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# Webinar objectives

- Learn the top 10 staffing challenges for tribal nursing homes and assisted living facilities
- Discuss past and present roles of nurse staffing agencies
- Learn about financial incentives during the pandemic and their impact on staffing shortages
- Hear about future staffing opportunities for tribal elder care



# Top 10 staffing challenges

- Low and fluctuating census – residents leaving or not being admitted; vicious cycle of low census and inability to hire
- More regulations and mandates with no relief (e.g., CMS, CDC, OSHA)
- Staff turnover due to working short-staffed
- Low availability of trained staff on reservations
- Staff burnout
- Effect of PPE restrictions on work environment
- Higher costs (e.g., agency staff costs)
- The end of higher pay rates that were due to COVID-19
- Family obligations and requirements
- Staff safety concerns with driving to and working in remote locations



# Past staffing concerns

## Nursing

- Bias against long-term versus acute care
- Encouragement of new graduates and excellent nurses to consider what skilled geriatric care looks like

## Housekeeping

- Past challenges of keeping up with knowledge and best practices
- New products
- New ways to clean
- Terminal room cleaning



# Present and ongoing staffing concerns

**Most tribal nursing homes are in rural and remote locations**

- Family obligations
- Staff safety concerns with driving to and working in remote locations





# Future staffing concerns

What would attract staff and incentivize them to work at tribal facilities?

- Generational concerns
- Coaching and correction concerns
- Balancing new COVID-19 mandates and regulations with dignity and respect
- Explaining hypocrisy and double standards
- Impacts of excessive regulations that make little sense or conflict with other laws or best practices
  - For example, Phases 2 and 3 require facilities to respect the voices of the elders, which staff do not see happening



# Challenges in using temporary staff

**“You want your own staff”**

**“In desperation, you use agency staff”**

**“Travel nurses are here 6–12 weeks, and then their contract ends”**

## Challenges:

- Continuity of care
- Knowledge of policies and procedures
- Knowledge of residents



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# Has COVID-19 ruined nursing? Have we lost our compassion?

## Companies working for employees

COVID-19 pay was not tied to tenure or credentials, so staff now feel entitled to the same pay received during the pandemic, which facilities cannot match

## Employees working for companies

Before COVID-19, staffing was more stable



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## “We don’t have youth taking classes”

- Case study in Rapid City, SD
- Case study in Central Wyoming College





# Specific COVID-19 challenges leading to staff shortages and job dissatisfaction

- Facilities are trying to balance regulations with what is best for the elders
- PPE and isolation precautions were used for ALL residents
- Recommendations and mandates created a huge staff divide, leading to loss of candidates
- Older staff had limited ability to wear masks
- Older staff were kept off of the COVID-19-positive unit
- Facilities attempted to treat all staff the same way



# Addressing burnout

- Staff were mandated to work overtime during pandemic
- Some staff were scared they would bring COVID-19 home
- Facility staff were angry that agency staff received more pay
- Facility staff worked short-staffed
- COVID-19 bonuses are no longer available
- Staff were asked to wear gowns, masks, gloves, and goggles for all patients
- Allocation of COVID-19 funds
- Staff working as travel nurses made good money but now suffer from PTSD



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# Concluding remarks & questions



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