

# Integrating Community Health Representatives (CHRs) Into the Continuum of Elder Care

*Culturally Grounded Approaches Across the  
Lifespan*

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**Indian Health Service**

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# Why Elder Care Requires a Public Health Response

- Elders experience interconnected medical, social, emotional, and functional needs
- Chronic disease, mobility challenges, cognitive changes, and caregiver strain require coordinated systems
- CHRs bridge clinical, public health, and community supports
- SDOH and historical trauma shape elder health



UCSF Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care. Tribal Community Health Representatives: Home care workforce insights, experiences, and recommendations for elder care. 2025.

# CHRs: A Trusted Elder-Care Workforce

- Deep community trust and cultural grounding
- Strong relationships with elders and families
- Ability to “meet elders where they are”
- Essential for reducing stigma and improving engagement



# Continuum of Care is ....



Continuum of care includes home and community-based services. An elder's needs can range from education, fitness classes, and transportation to dietary management, home modifications to allow a person to age in place, or even full-time skilled nursing facilities.

## Wellness.

Promotes independence, healthy living, and quality of life.

It is person-centered and tailored to an individual's needs over an extended period.

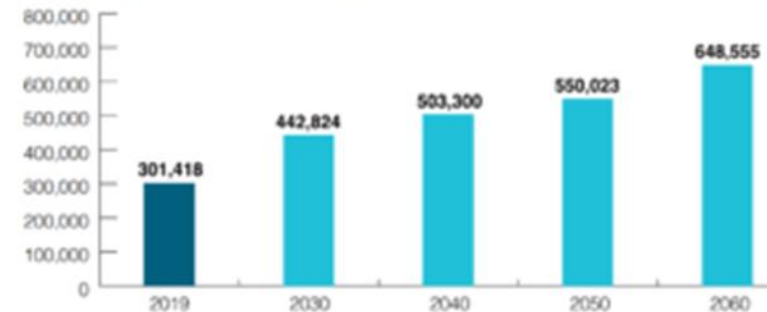




# National Momentum in Elder Care

- CDC Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map
- CMS GUIDE Model for dementia care
- NICOA Continuum of Care framework
- Emphasis on early detection, caregiver support, and culturally responsive care

**Population and Projections of American Indians and Alaska Natives Age 65+: 2019 to 2060**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates and Projections, 2017 (revised)

Note: Increments in years are uneven. Lighter bars indicate projections. The terms American Indians and Alaska Natives refer to American Indians and Alaska Natives who are not Hispanic and do not identify as more than one race. The number of Americans age 65 and older who reported they were American Indian and Alaska Native in combination with one or more races was 702,325 in 2019.

# Healthy Aging Foundations



- Physical activity and fall prevention
- Nutrition and chronic disease control
- Social engagement and cultural connection
- CHR-led wellness groups



# Chronic Disease Management



- Most elders live with multiple chronic conditions
- CHRs support medication adherence and self-management
- Follow-up, reminders, and culturally relevant education
- Bridge between elders and providers



# Mobility, Falls, and Functional Support

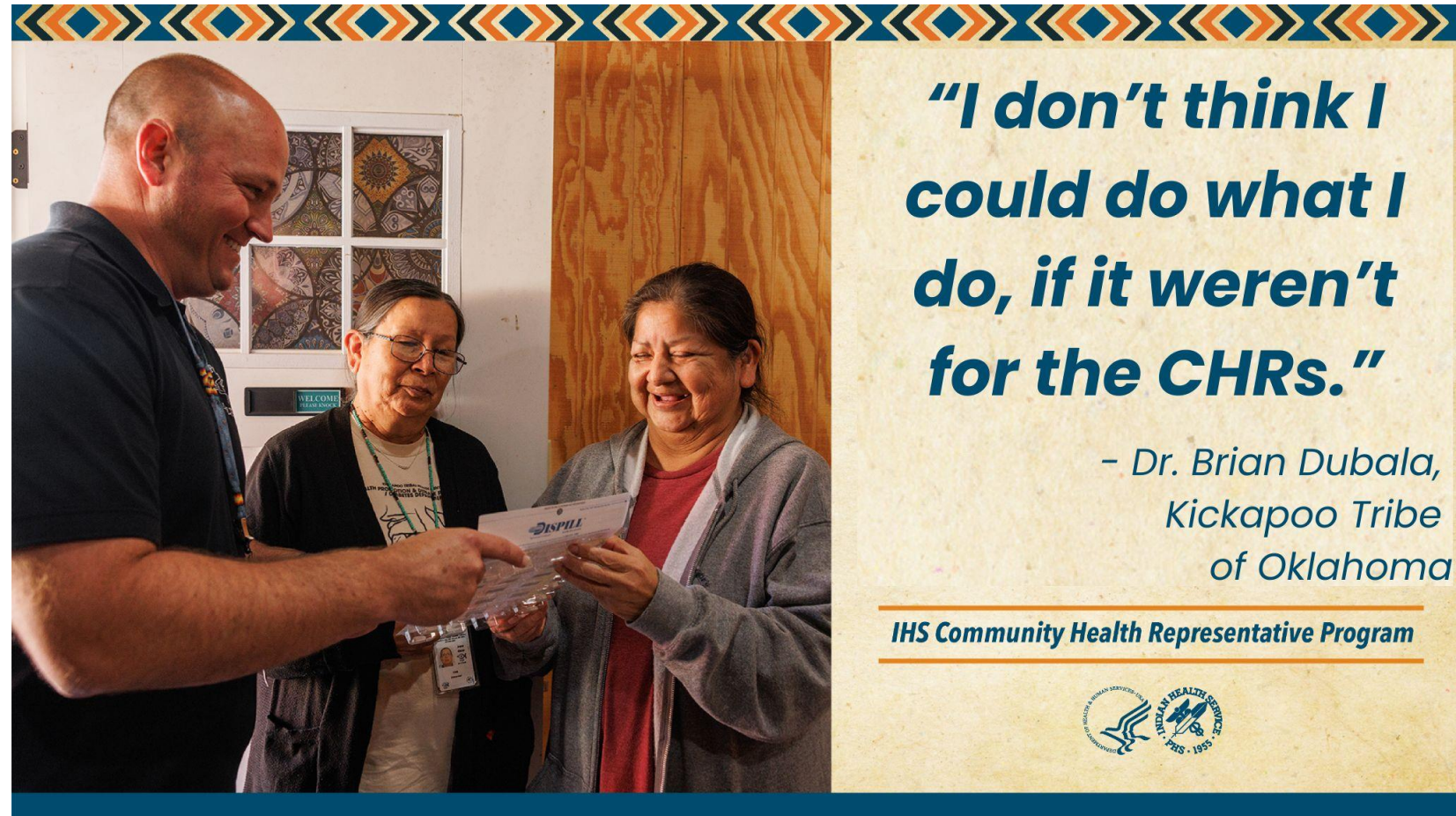
- Falls are a leading cause of injury
- Home safety assessments
- Equipment: walkers, bath aids, guardrails
- Coordination of home modification



# Medication Safety



- Polypharmacy is common
- CHRs help elders understand medications
- Pillbox setup and monitoring
- Communication with providers about concerns



***“I don’t think I could do what I do, if it weren’t for the CHRs.”***

*– Dr. Brian Dubala,  
Kickapoo Tribe  
of Oklahoma*

***IHS Community Health Representative Program***



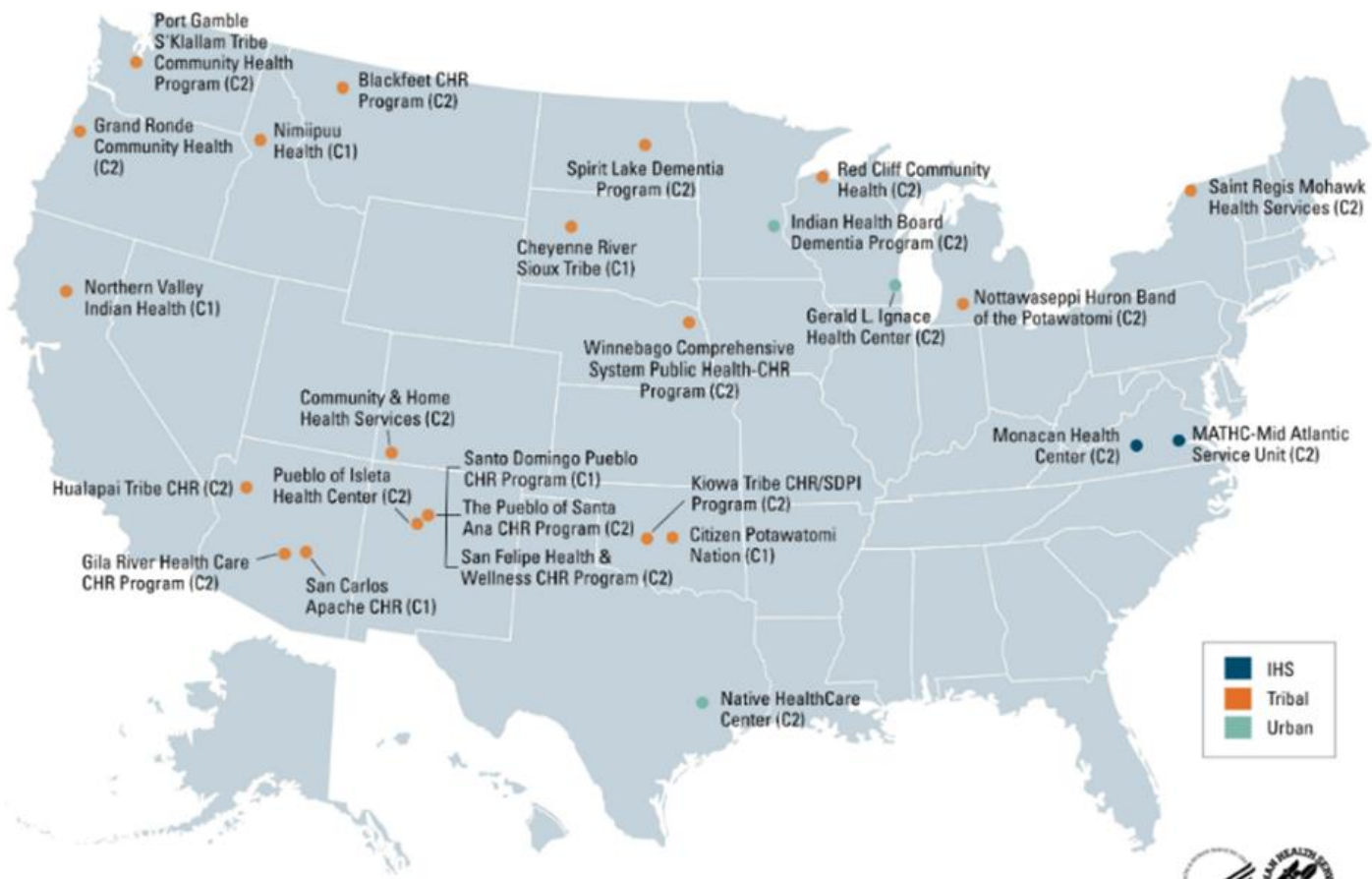
# Social Isolation & Emotional Well-Being



- Isolation increases risk for depression and cognitive decline
- CHRs provide social connection through home visits
- Group activities reduce loneliness
- COVID-19 highlighted CHR essential role



# Early Identification of Changes



C1 and C2 refer to Cohort 1 in 2024 and Cohort 2 in 2025



## INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE (IHS) COMMUNITY HEALTH REPRESENTATIVE (CHR)

Project Evaluation Report: Implementation of a Cognitive Screening Tool in a Community Health Setting

- CHRs notice early functional or cognitive changes
- Observation in the home is key
- Support families in recognizing concerns
- Early identification improves outcome



# Dementia as One Component of Elder Care

- Dementia is one part of a broader continuum
- CHRs provide education and navigation
- Safety planning and caregiver support
- Reduce stigma and improve early detection



# Caregiver Navigation Across Elder Needs



- Caregivers support chronic disease, mobility, memory, and daily tasks
- CHRs help caregivers access resources
- Reduce stress and burnout



# CHR Core Roles Across Elder Care



- Cultural mediation
- Health education
- Care coordination
- Advocacy
- Assessment and outreach

Community Health Representatives:  
Empowering Communities Through Health and  
Wellness



Community Health Representatives as Cultural  
Liaisons:  
"We Talk It, We Live It, We Speak It"



Community Health Representatives:  
Public Health and Health Care Partnerships  
Improving Health Outcomes



Healing Together: Patients and  
Community Health Representatives  
in Partnership



# Building an Elder-Care-Capable CHR Workforce

- Training in aging, chronic disease, safety, and dementia
- Cultural healing and caregiver support
- Need for tribal-specific and rural-specific training
- Investment in workforce development and sustainability

## CHR Training and Education

**IHS CHR Learning and Training Hub**


**What's New?**

CHR Basic Training is now referred to as **CHR I: Foundations**, providing the important base a CHR will need as established by the National Council on CHW Core Consensus Standards. Over the next year, additional training opportunities will be announced.

Visit the [CHR Training Hub](#) to apply for CHR training through the "ENROLL NOW" link.

**CHR I: Foundations Training**

Access available training on the [Community Health Representative Training Hub](#).



## Indian Country ECHO CHR Program Series

The Indian Country Community Health Representative (CHR) ECHO webinar series [ECHO webinar series](#) provides comprehensive information to support Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Urban Indian Community Health Representatives and community-based health workers. Monthly webinar series are held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 3pm ET. Sessions provide essential information and knowledge for the community health workforce unique to competencies, care, screening, emergency preparedness, and home visiting.

## TRIAD Community Health Representatives Training: Core Sessions

- 1** Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias for Community Health Representatives
- 2** Person-Centered Care Strategies
- 3** Family and Caregiver Support



# Integrating CHRs Into Tribal Continuum of Care Systems

- Align CHR roles with continuum of elder care
- Strengthen partnerships with tribal leaders and programs
- Expand home and community-based services
- Support aging in place



# Closing



- CHRs are essential to elder wellness
- They embody cultural grounding and community trust
- Their work strengthens families and future generations



# References

*UCSF Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care. Tribal Community Health Representatives: Home care workforce insights, experiences, and recommendations for elder care. 2025.*

Full Report

<https://healthworkforce.ucsf.edu/publications>

*National Indian Council on Aging (NICOA). Tribal Continuum of Care National Resource Center.*

*CDC. Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map.*

*CMS. GUIDE Model for Dementia Care.*

# Acknowledgements

- Community Health Representatives
- Elders, caregivers, and families
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- IHS Elder Health Team
- Public Health Team
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**Thank you**

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