

Cherokee Nation Awarded \$450K for Hep C Linkage to Care Program

The program supports American Indian/Alaska Native people, who experience the highest rates of hepatitis C virus infection.

October 9, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

The Cherokee Nation received a \$450,000 award from the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP) to improve hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment rates, reduce transmission, address disparities and more.

In 2020, approximately 2.4 million people in the United States had HCV, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people are disproportionately affected by HCV infection and experienced the highest rates of acute HCV infection (2.1 cases per 100,000 persons) and HCV-associated mortality (10.17 per 100,000 persons) in 2020.

Supported through the [Evaluation of Linkage to Care Programs in Support of Hepatitis C Elimination](#) cooperative agreement, a three-year program that aims to implement HCV community navigation and improve [access to care](#) among AI/AN people within the Cherokee Nation Reservation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, according to an [OIDP news release](#).

The Cherokee Nation's HCV Engagement and Linkage Program will collaborate with four community-based programs to screen AI/AN people receiving services for [substance use](#) disorders and housing insecurities and provide rapid HCV, HIV and syphilis testing. Community program staff will connect patients who test positive for any condition to appropriate care as well.

Through patient navigation and peer support, the program promotes timely linkage to HCV care and improved HCV outcomes. Locations that typically serve populations with higher rates of HCV, such as harm reduction programs, opioid treatment clinics or outpatient clinics, will be prioritized, according to OIDP.

This plan aligns with the [Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan](#), which also seeks improved linkage to care between community-based organizations, syringe service programs, substance use disorder treatment programs and more.

To read more, click [#Alaska Native](#) or [#Native American](#). There, you'll find headlines such as

[“Cherokee Nation Makes Progress Toward Hepatitis C Elimination,”](#) [“\\$5M in Federal Funds to End HIV and Hepatitis C Among American Indians”](#) and [“Alaska Natives Successfully Treated With Antiviral Therapy for Hepatitis C.”](#)

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