

## **2002 American Indian and Alaska Native Roundtable on Long Term Care**

April 11-12, 2002

**Issue:** Federally funded long term care is virtually nonexistent in Indian Country. The needs of elders for long term care, home health and personal care, is growing with the increasing size and longevity of the Indian population.

**Issue:** Lack of care can weaken older Indians' health and premature hospitalization and unnecessary utilization of existing health care services in Indian country

**Issue:** Nursing homes are rare in Indian communities which means that elders don't get the care that they desperately need.

**Issue:** The first Indian nursing home was constructed in 1969. By 1993, there were only 13 tribally operated nursing homes. Many elders are placed in non-Indian facilities and become isolated from their families and friends which leads to family dissatisfaction.

**Issue:** Medicare is unable to meet extended needs in chronic care and only covers a limited amount of nursing home care.

**Issue:** Medicaid refers tribes to Health Maintenance Organizations or HMOs which rarely enhance Indian access to health care. Problems such as distance, transportation, and cultural and linguistic barriers impair the health care to the elderly.

**Issue:** Medicaid is ran by both State and Federal government. If the tribes want to influence Medicaid funding for long term care, they should focus on the State side. When changes are needed to guidelines, that's when they should work with the Federal government.

**Issue:** Native Americans/ Alaska Natives do not fully participate in Medicaid and the reason is unknown.

**Issue:** With Medicaid, the state may not cover the services offered or needed by the tribe. If they do have the services, the requirements for operating such services may be too difficult for a tribe to meet.

**Issue:** Tribes need to work with other groups to achieve their goals as they are a small percentage in states population.

**Issue:** Home modifications should include installing wheelchair ramps, widening doorways, and retrofitting bathrooms and kitchens. Funding could be important in Indian Country.

**Issue:** The relationship between states and tribes requires active and timely tribal consultation, technical assistance and a shared vision.

**Issue:** Due to the population increase of American Indians/ Alaska Natives indicates the growing need for long term care services as the AI/AN population ages.

**Issue:** Service need has been estimated using a number of approaches; census data extrapolation, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and community assessments.

**Issue:** Collecting quality data is necessary for establishing a baseline level of need within localized communities in order to qualify for program funding and demonstrate appropriateness of the long-term care response.

**Issue:** the rural character of many tribal groups tends to magnify long term care service challenges, causing the long-term care needs of the AI/AN population to remain largely unmet.

**Issue:** While funding opportunities exist, current care is typically uncoordinated among the funding agencies.

**Issue:** Barriers to service are complex, including: transportation, housing, amenities, recruitment and training of caregivers, and retention of skilled caregivers.

**Issue:** Elders have an important role in AI/AN culture as tribal culture keep that can be compromised by western long-term care models which promote an institutional model isolating the elder from family and community.

**Issue:** To help preserve AI/AN traditional culture within the long-term care framework, it is suggested that rituals that symbolize important cultural values must be incorporated into daily operations. Rituals in long term may include rites of passage, renewal, intensification and revitalization.

**Issue:** To keep culture in long term care includes, using appropriate experts and elders to guide the process, considering the social status of the elder in addition to chronological age, organizing elders among ranks to provide guidelines, and developing a program of rituals of respect.