



# 2026 TRIBAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN



**Choctaw Nation** Public Health

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our partners comprise numerous individuals and departments that contributed to the 2026 Tribal Health Improvement Plan (THIP), including the broader community.

We are grateful for the efforts of the following individuals who served on the THIP revision process:

## Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

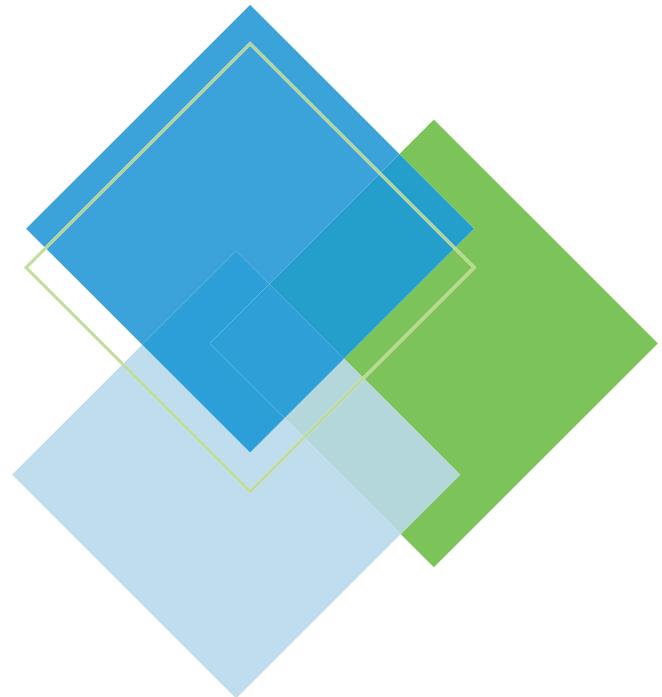
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Halito (Hello)!

Improving the overall health of the Choctaw Nation continues to be the focus of the Choctaw Nation Public Health Department and Health Services Authority (CNHSA) as a whole. In 2026, we updated the Choctaw Nation Tribal Health Assessment to identify the immediate needs of our Tribal communities. The results of our Health Assessment help further our progress along the roadmap to a healthier Choctaw Nation. This assessment tells a story about the health and wellbeing of the Choctaw Nation and guides our efforts to improve public health across the reservation.

In 2023, the Public Health Department created the original Tribal Health Improvement Plan (THIP) to increase mental and physical wellbeing of our Nation and communities. In 2026, we revised this THIP to reflect the most recent findings from the Tribal Health Assessment, underscoring our commitment to continuous review and improvement towards our goal of healthier communities.

We adopt our health improvement tools through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). Through PHAB, Choctaw Nation strives to be transparent in achieving our Nation's trust in health services. We encourage our communities to visit the PHAB webpage to learn about the various standards required for promoting, delivering, and ensuring high quality public health services are delivered to those we serve.

The Tribal Health Improvement Plan involves collaboration across Choctaw Nation and other inter-tribal resources. We emphasize the importance of how both internal and external partnerships assist the Health Department with promoting and maintaining healthier communities. Choctaw Nation Public Health recognizes and appreciates everyone involved in the creation of this document, including our Tribal communities as whole.

Yakohe,

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Choctaw Nation is committed to promoting and ensuring the health and well-being of people where they live, work, learn and play so that our Vision: “Living out the Chahta Spirit of Faith, Family and Culture” will continue. The CNO Public Health Department is responsible for delivering a wide array of services to a population of over 55,697 Choctaw Nation Tribal Members living in the Choctaw Reservation, which covers all or part of 13 counties in southeastern Oklahoma. Utilizing our Tribal health services and creating partnerships with public health communities, the Public Health Department works to ensure the health and well-being of all people. We promote and use data-driven innovation to reach our strategic goals, support quality improvement and strengthen improvement planning strategies.

The Tribal Public Health Department’s focus on innovation and partnership helps to strengthen the infrastructure of new and existing programs for elder-care, youth services and clinical care. The existing public health goals are to eliminate health disparities, identify community health needs, provide effective leadership for the development of health policies, and assure the availability of health services.

The Tribal Public Health Department worked with other Department leaders, stakeholders, and CNHSA administrators to update the **1. Tribal Health Assessment, 2. Tribal Health Improvement Plan, and 3. Organizational Strategic Plan.** The Team identified high priority areas and developed strategies to reduce health disparities, enhance the quality of life and empower community members.

The following health priorities have been identified:

1. Reduce the rate of late-stage cancer diagnoses among American Indians in the Choctaw Nation and improve screening rates.
2. Increase the use of mental and behavioral health services.
3. Improve the Social Determinants of Health among American Indians in the Choctaw Nation.

Public Health Accreditation helps the Choctaw Nation Public Health Department achieve these priorities by offering a comprehensive approach to including data surveillance, monitoring, and quality improvement (QI). The three-part phase includes the following prerequisites: **1. Tribal Health Assessment Plan 2. Tribal Health Improvement Plan 3. Tribal Health Strategic and Organizational Plan.** The Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority holds sacred the culture of health and well-being of our Tribal members and community. Programs will be implemented and continuously monitored so that our **Mission: “To the Chahta Proud, ours is the sovereign nation offering opportunities for growth and prosperity.”** will be honored.

# INTRODUCTION

Originally occupying what is now Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee and Louisiana, the Choctaw Nation is one of the largest tribes in the United States. With a population of over 225,000 people and over 55,697 CNO Tribal Members residing within Choctaw Nation's Reservation, The Choctaw Nation is sovereign, with its own government, laws, and jurisdiction. The Choctaw Nation has a strong tradition of education and community service and is known for its contributions to art, music, and literature. The Choctaw Nation is actively involved in economic development and, through various programs and initiatives, works to improve the lives of its Citizens.

The Chahta have a history of forward-thinking and servant leadership. The Nation values traditions and holds sacred "holittopa" the health and wellness of our communities "achukma hosh." As a health services authority, CNHSA serves as the lead division responsible for coordinating and delivering health care services across the Choctaw Nation. It plays a key role in supporting Tribal Public Health initiatives, fostering collaboration among programs, and ensuring that services align with the Nation's overall health goals. We uphold a tradition of servant leadership "i talali" to create better lives for those we serve.

The Choctaw Nation believes a public health approach to health care service is essential to healthy communities. Health promotion and disease prevention are of equal importance as taking care of patients when they are ill. The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), the national accrediting body for public health has identified three prerequisites for public health accreditation. The 2025 Tribal Health Assessment (THA), the Tribal Health Improvement Plan (THIP) and the Organization strategic plan will be used to promote the health and well-being of our Tribal members and community.

# MISSION

*TO THE CHOCTAW PROUD, OURS IS THE SOVEREIGN NATION OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND PROSPERITY.*

# VISION

*LIVING OUT THE CHAHTA SPIRIT OF FAITH, FAMILY AND CULTURE.*





# Chi Hullo Li

We Care For You

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

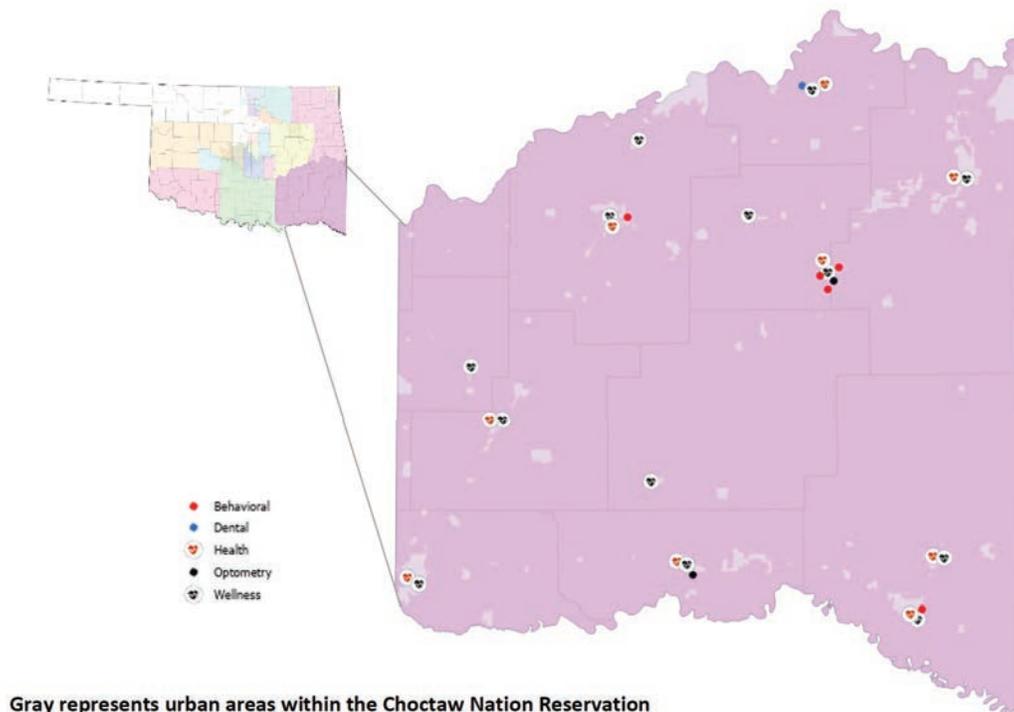
# ABOUT CHOCTAW NATION

The Chahta Proud, are resilient and strong. The Nation presently makes its home in ten-and one-half county reservation in southeastern Oklahoma (Figure 1). The Chahta pride ourselves on our ability to preserve and celebrate our many unique traditions, including our language, historical games, dances, and artwork.

Today the Choctaw Nation is the third largest federally recognized tribe with nearly a quarter million enrolled members and a reservation area that spans nearly 11,000 square miles and ten-and one-half counties (see Figure 1). With its government seat located in Durant OK, the Choctaw Nation has three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The nation delivers a wide range of services including education, housing, family, elder, culture, and health services.

In 1999, the Choctaw Nation was the first tribe to build its own hospital. This state-of-the-art facility located in Talihina, includes inpatient care surgery, family practice and pediatrics, radiology, physical therapy, optometry dental, 24/7 emergency services and more. In addition, CNHSA operates eight outlying clinics “Ahlakofi” located in Atoka, Broken Bow, Durant, Hugo, Idabel, McAlester, Poteau, and Stigler (Figure 2). CNHSA operates other services throughout southeastern Oklahoma including a diabetes wellness center, behavioral health and substance abuse programs, residential treatment facilities and fitness centers.

**Figure 2: Choctaw Nation Reservation and health center locations**



# TRIBAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT REPORT 2025

In 2020, CNHSA completed a Tribal Health Assessment Report. Through this report, Choctaw Nation demonstrated its commitment to an overall health improvement process that promotes a culture of wellness, uses evidence-based practices, and engages stakeholders and communities. The process was part of a larger effort toward data-based planning and decision-making and increased accountability for making measurable improvements in health outcomes. The assessment provided a comprehensive report that served as a centralized source of information and data to better understand the community's overall health.

The assessment report was used to establish priorities, educate leaders, mobilize Tribal resources, and develop an improvement plan. As shown in the report, the Choctaw Nation Public Health worked with CNHSA staff and partnered with community stakeholders to develop their Tribal Health Improvement Plan (THIP). CNHSA used public health accreditation as a framework to improve quality, strengthen the health information management system, address inefficiencies, and improve health outcomes.

In 2025, CNO Public Health updated and revised the original 2020 Tribal Health Assessment Report to reflect new data, progress made, and evolving community health priorities. This updated report continues to guide the Nation's efforts toward sustainable health improvement and ensures that planning and decision-making remain responsive to current community needs.



# THIP PROGRESS & 2026 MODIFICATIONS

2023 STRATEGY	MEASURE	2024 TARGET	2024 RESULT	2026 GOAL	STRATEGY MODIFICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase applications for Choctaw Nation Housing services.</li> <li>• Promote housing programs through media and community events.</li> </ul>	TBD	2% Increase	1,061	1,082	Specified which application rates would be measured.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase applications for Choctaw Nation Tribal members participating in the Affordable Rental program.</li> <li>• Promote program and share qualifications with tribal community and other area housing authorities.</li> </ul>	70 (2021 & 2022)	72	577	589	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number Choctaw Nation Tribal members participating in the independent elder program.</li> <li>• Promote program and share qualifications through media with area senior centers and Public Health Departments.</li> <li>• New elder community build projects</li> </ul>	18 (2021 & 2022)	19	252	257	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of new homes built for Choctaw Nation Tribal members participating in the Lease Purchase (LEAP) program.</li> <li>• Promote program and qualifications.</li> <li>• New build projects</li> </ul>	120 (2021 & 2022)	123	171	174	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of affordable rental homes in Choctaw Nation Reservation</li> <li>• New build projects</li> </ul>	396 (2022)	404	583	595	



2023 STRATEGY	MEASURE	2024 TARGET	2024 RESULT	2026 GOAL	STRATEGY MODIFICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the number of homes rehabilitated in the Choctaw Nation Reservation.</li> <li>Promote program and qualifications.</li> </ul>	600 (2022)	612	856	873	Specified which application rates would be measured.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease the number of housing insecure in the Choctaw Nation Reserve.</li> </ul>	TBD	2% Increase	*	*	Identified data source in health record screening documents completed at patient check-in.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the rate of AIAN in southeastern Oklahoma who are aged 50+ that have had home blood stool test.</li> </ul>	34.0% (2020)	37.0% (2023)	60%	63%	Adjusted the measure to reflect all screenings for colorectal cancer instead of FOBT specific.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the use of FOBT colorectal screening methods</li> </ul>	1952 (2021)	2011 (2023)	1,132	1,166	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the use of screening colonoscopy for colorectal screening methods</li> <li>Utilize case managers for patient follow-up and reminders.</li> </ul>	2000 (2022)	2060 (2023)	1,251	1,289	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the rate of AIAN in southeastern Oklahoma who are aged 40+ that have had a mammogram in the past 2 years</li> <li>Utilize case managers for patient follow-up and reminders.</li> </ul>	72.6% (2020)	75.6% (2023)	61.5%	64.5%	Indicated on the 2026 measure that this measure was among CNHSA patients.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the use of approved mammography screening methods</li> <li>Promote patient self-exam and offer screening to women over the age of 40.</li> <li>Use media and community events to promote annual screenings.</li> </ul>	5,546 (2022)	5,712 (2023)	4,071	4,193	



2023 STRATEGY	MEASURE	2024 TARGET	2024 RESULT	2026 GOAL	STRATEGY MODIFICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the use of approved lung screening methods</li> <li>• Initiate a low-dose CT scan program.</li> <li>• Use media to promote screenings</li> <li>• Utilize case managers for patient follow-up and reminders.</li> </ul>	1,227 (2022)	1,264 (2023)	1,439	1,482	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of the importance of depression screening among Choctaw Nation Providers.</li> <li>• Conduct baseline and pulse surveys quarterly to determine Tribal awareness.</li> </ul>	TBD	2% Increase	*	*	Removed this strategy due to difficulty obtaining measurable data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of depression screening in Choctaw Nation clinics.</li> <li>• Implement depression screenings to all clinics for scheduled and same day appointments.</li> <li>• Conduct depression screenings in all Employee Health Clinics.</li> </ul>	10,378 (2022)	10,689 (2023)	26,828	27,634	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of importance of adolescent (age 12–17) depression screening among Choctaw Nation Providers.</li> </ul>	TBD	2% Increase	*	*	Removed this strategy due to difficulty obtaining measurable data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of depression screening of adolescents (age 12–17) in Choctaw Nation clinics.</li> <li>• Implement depression screenings to all pediatric clinics for scheduled and same day appointments.</li> </ul>	1,025 (2022)	1,056 (2023)	2,915	2,992	

These strategic goals are measured using various systems across Choctaw Nation, including CNOHousing Authority databases and CNHSA electronic health record systems (EHR; Epic). Choctaw Nation's Strategic Development Department also monitors various improvement measures related to the success of the above-mentioned strategies.



# PUBLIC HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Public health is concerned with promoting and protecting the health of entire communities. This work is achieved by promoting healthy lifestyles and choices, preventing disease and injury, and ensuring safe and healthy environments where people live, learn, work and play. The Choctaw Nation believes a public health approach to health care services is essential to healthy communities.

This Tribal Health Improvement Plan is part of the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) accreditation process for the Choctaw Nation. PHAB is a non-profit organization that provides accreditation to public health departments in the United States. The purpose of PHAB is to improve the quality and effectiveness of public health agencies by setting standards for performance and providing a process for evaluating and recognizing those agencies that meet those standards. To be accredited by PHAB, a public health department must demonstrate that it is meeting a set of national standards for public health practices, including leadership, governance, policy development, data and information systems, and community engagement. Accreditation by PHAB is voluntary, but it is seen as a mark of excellence and can help the Choctaw Nation to secure funding, partnerships, and other resources.

A Tribal Health Improvement Plan (THIP) is a long-term, systematic approach to improving the health of the Choctaw Nation. It is developed by a group of stakeholders, such as the CNHSA representatives, public health departments, community organizations, Choctaw government and members of the Tribal community.

The process of developing a THIP typically involves several steps, including:

1. **Identifying the Choctaw Nation's community's health needs:** This involves collecting data on health status and identifying the factors that contribute to poor health outcomes.
2. **Setting goals and objectives:** Once the health needs of the community have been identified, the next step is to set specific, measurable goals and objectives that address those needs.
3. **Developing strategies:** Based on the goals and objectives, the group will then develop strategies to address the identified health needs. These strategies may include educational campaigns, policy changes, or new programs and services.
4. **Implementing the plan:** The group will then implement the strategies and interventions outlined in the THIP.
5. **Evaluating progress:** Regular evaluation is an important part of the THIP process. This can involve collecting data on the interventions' effectiveness and soliciting feedback from the community.



A well-developed THIP addresses a wide range of health issues within the Choctaw community, including chronic diseases, mental health, and access to healthcare. It helps to build a sense of community “tamahushi” and encourages CNHSA representatives to work together to improve the health and well-being of all Citizens and community members

The CNHSA utilized the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model to inform the Tribal Public Health Improvement Plan.

MAPP is a community-based strategic planning process developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (<https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/map>). MAPP is designed to help communities improve their public health systems and outcomes by engaging stakeholders in a collaborative process to assess, prioritize, and address public health issues (Figure 2).

The MAPP process involves six phases:

1. **Organizing for Success:** In this phase, the CHNSA creates a steering committee or workgroup to guide the MAPP process and to identify and recruit other stakeholders.
2. **Visioning:** This phase involves developing a shared vision for the Community’s public health future, based on input from a range of stakeholders.
3. **Assessing the Public Health System:** Through a variety of data collection methods and input from stakeholders, the CHNSA assesses the current state of its public health system, including its strengths and weaknesses.
4. **Formulating Goals and Strategies:** In this phase, the CNHSA develops goals and strategies to address the identified strategic issues, based on the input and feedback of stakeholders.
5. **Action Cycle:** This phase involves implementing the strategies, monitoring progress, and evaluating the success of the MAPP process, with the aim of continuous improvement and adaptation.

Overall, MAPP is a process to help the Choctaw Nation improve their public health systems by engaging stakeholders in a collaborative and data-driven process to identify and address priority public health issues.



Choctaw Nation utilizes the MAPP while crafting and implementing strategic goals towards health improvement. Utilizing the data obtained by the Tribal Health Assessment (THA), Choctaw Nation employs MAPP to mobilize and engage communities across Choctaw Nation to improve the various social determinants of health affecting the environment that we work, play, and live within.

Priority areas that disproportionately affect the public health of Choctaw Nation were reviewed by the Public Health Department, and cross referenced with services available by CNO, to identify avenues of which these determinants can be addressed. For example, access to behavioral health services were identified as a deficient determinant of health in the Tribal Health Assessment. Utilizing the identified areas of concern from the THA (i.e., access to behavioral health counseling services and adequate screening for depression and suicide ideation), Choctaw Nation develops strategic solutions to address such concerns, including policy change recommendations. Choctaw Nation Public Health and Behavioral Health Departments has published routine depression screening best practice policies within CNO's internal policy database for reference by CNHSA Healthcare Providers.

Priority areas identified for the THIP were obtained from data gathered for the Tribal Health Assessment, which was then compiled and reviewed by respective Choctaw Nation departments involved in applicable measures identified for improvement. Choctaw Nation Public Health held various focus groups with departments involved in each measure to review proposed strategic goals, and once approved, presented to the Tribal Public Health Committee for final feedback and approval.





Figure 2. Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) Model



Adapted from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/mapp/main>



Choctaw Nation convened a Tribal Public Health team comprised of Clinical Care staff, Public Health Programs staff, Epidemiologist, Public Health Accreditation Coordinator, Tribal Leadership, Environmental Specialists and Housing Executives. The Team included Choctaw Nation staff who were not traditionally considered public health but whose jobs impact the health and well-being of people. The Public Health Committee engaged community representatives who provided input and guidance throughout the improvement planning process. The University of Oklahoma, Hudson College of Public Health, a tribal public health consultant, assisted with planning and facilitating community and stakeholder engagement. The Tribal Public Health team, which met routinely, was instrumental in reviewing health assessment data, guiding community engagement efforts, identifying strategic priorities, and developing the overall THIP. The Team recommended that the Tribal Health Assessment data be presented to CNHSA/CNO staff, Tribal law enforcement, housing development, community groups and public health system stakeholders for input and priority setting. Using a consistent approach and consensus-building techniques, participants identified the following health areas to be priorities addressed in the plan:

**1. Social Determinants of Health**

**2. Chronic Disease Prevention**

**3. Mental and Behavioral Health**

Issues and themes identified by Tribal community stakeholders included social determinants of health, chronic disease prevention, and mental and behavioral health. Public health system stakeholders identified opportunities to leverage data resources to use our data more effectively. Resources identified by stakeholders included the resiliency and sovereignty of Choctaw people, honor to which staff implement programs and strong Tribal leadership. Tribal Leadership, staff and the community are committed to a happy and healthy Choctaw Nation and positive relationships with state and local agencies, community-based organizations, the faith community, and others. Choctaw Nation operates a strong, comprehensive health care system and works with diverse public health stakeholders who are committed and invested in the overall health and wellness of those served by the Nation.



# HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

The Choctaw Nation Tribal Health Improvement Plan is a roadmap to promote health and quality of life among communities and families through culture, collaboration, community engagement and empowerment. While all health issues are a priority, the Tribal Health Improvement Plan focuses on the following areas:

## PRIORITY ISSUE: SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH



Social determinants of health are the various economic, social, and environmental factors that influence people's health and well-being. These factors include access to healthcare, education, housing, employment, and income, as well as social and cultural norms, political and legal systems, and the physical environment. Social determinants of health can create health inequalities, where some groups experience poorer health outcomes than others. The Tribal Public Health Department and Public Health Workgroup identifies Choctaw Nation Housing security as a priority. Housing security within the Choctaw Nation will help to achieve health equity and ensure that our Reservation communities will live a healthy life regardless of their background or life circumstances.

Housing is a crucial social determinant of health that can significantly impact an individual's physical and mental well-being. Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is essential for good health outcomes. Poor housing conditions, such as overcrowding, inadequate ventilation, or exposure to environmental hazards like mold or lead, can lead to respiratory diseases, allergies, and other health problems. Additionally, living in unstable or inadequate housing can cause chronic stress and negatively impact mental health.



Homelessness and housing insecurity can further exacerbate these health risks and lead to increased rates of infectious diseases and mental health problems. Therefore, addressing housing as a social determinant of health is vital to promoting overall health and well-being.

Choctaw Nation (CNO), is committed to addressing housing insecurity among Choctaw families. By working with intertribal partners, Choctaw Nation Public Health aims to increase by two percent (2%) the number of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) families housed within the Choctaw Nation Reservation. This objective will be achieved through increasing applications for Choctaw Nation Housing services and by the promotion of Choctaw Nation Housing programs through media and community events. Additional strategies include the following: sharing qualifications with Tribal community and other area housing authorities, promoting program qualifications through media, and promoting new elder community build projects “sipokni aiasha” through senior citizen centers. The promotion of housing program qualifications for the LEAP Program (Lease to Purchase), home rehabilitation projects, and new build projects will help the Choctaw nation overcome housing insecurity. As of November 2025, 690 LEAP homes have been built by the Choctaw Nation Housing program. Among all Choctaw Nation Housing Authority rental programs, CNOHA currently has 978 rental units on inventory as of November 2025, with additional units proposed for the upcoming year.



## PRIORITY A: SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

*GOAL: Improve the social determinants of health among Choctaw Nation.*

*STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: Each year, increase by two percent, the number of families housed in the Choctaw Nation Reservation.*

MEASURE	2026 TARGET	STRATEGY
1,061 (FY 24)	1,082	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase applications received for Choctaw Nation home finance services.</li> <li>• Promote housing programs through media and community events.</li> </ul>
577 (CY 24) 70 (CY 21-22)	589	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number of CNO Tribal Members participating in the Affordable Rental Program.</li> <li>• Promote program and share qualifications with tribal community and other area housing authorities.</li> </ul>
252 (CY 24) 18 (CY 21-22)	257	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of CNO Tribal Members participating in the Independent Elder Program.</li> <li>• Promote program and share qualifications through media, with area senior centers, and the Public Health Department.</li> <li>• New elder community build projects.</li> </ul>
171 (2024) 90 (2023)	174	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of new homes built for CNO Tribal Members participating in the Lease Purchase Program (LEAP).</li> <li>• Promote program and qualifications.</li> <li>• New build projects.</li> </ul>
583 (2024) 396 (2022)	595	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of affordable rental homes in Choctaw Nation.</li> <li>• New build projects.</li> </ul>
856 (2024) 600 (2022)	873	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of home rehabilitations in the Choctaw Nation Reservation.</li> <li>• Promote program and qualifications.</li> </ul>
TBD*	2% Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease the number of housing insecure in the Choctaw Nation Reservation.</li> </ul>

Priority A Source: Choctaw Nation Housing Authority Internal Data, Provided October 2025.

\*Note: To most accurately represent this measure, rates for housing insecurity are not available at the time of publication due to mid-year data system transitions. Housing insecurity rates are currently being monitored in the EPIC EHR system, but not enough data has been collected to accurately reflect the measure and/or progress at this time.



## PRIORITY ISSUE: CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION



Chronic disease prevention is important because chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, are the leading causes of death and disability worldwide. Chronic diseases significantly impact individuals, families, communities, and entire societies, both in health and economic consequences. Chronic diseases are often linked to lifestyle factors such as poor diet, physical inactivity, and tobacco use. Effective prevention measures help reduce the incidence and severity of chronic diseases by addressing these risk factors. Prevention measures include promoting healthy behaviors, such as regular physical activity, healthy eating, and avoiding tobacco use. Screening can lead to early disease detection and access to appropriate medical care is essential for the overall health of our Nation. For the Choctaw, chronic disease prevention “atakummi” can lead to better health outcomes and improved quality of life.

Cancer is a chronic disease characterized by the uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells in the body. Unlike acute diseases, which have a sudden onset and short duration, cancer develops gradually over time and can persist for years or even decades. Cancer can occur in any part of the body and can have diverse types and subtypes, each with different risk factors, symptoms, and treatments.

The most common cancer types diagnosed within the Choctaw Nation reservation include lung and bronchus, breast, prostate, colorectal, and melanomas of the skin (2024 Choctaw Nation Comprehensive Cancer Report). Compared to the State of Oklahoma, lung and bronchus cancer diagnoses are more prevalent in Choctaw Nation (63.3 and 75.7, respectively). Colorectal cancer diagnoses are also more prevalent in Choctaw Nation when compared to the State (44.4 and 39.1, respectively). However, incidence of breast and prostate cancers is lower within CNO, compared to the State.

Effective cancer prevention and treatment require a comprehensive approach, including reducing exposure to risk factors such as tobacco use, promoting healthy lifestyles, and providing timely and appropriate medical care. For instance, cancer screenings, such as low dose CT scans, FOBT (Fecal Occult Blood Test) and mammography can be used to identify cancer before the patient exhibits symptoms. Support services such as psychosocial support, symptom management, and palliative care can help individuals with cancer manage the chronic nature of the disease and maintain their quality of life. The Choctaw Nation is committed to reducing cancer incidence and cancer risk within the reservation, and is taking a comprehensive approach to achieving this goal.



CNHSA offers many cancer screening options to Native Americans living within the Choctaw Nation Reservation, including colorectal, breast, and lung cancer screenings just to name a few. The CNHSA providers and Tribal Public Health Department identified three cancer screening objectives and related strategies to help reduce the rate of cancer in the Choctaw Nation. The Objectives and Strategies for improvement are as follows:

- Increasing by 3 percent the percent of eligible adults (age 45-75) who receive colorectal cancer screening from 60 percent in FY 2024 to 63 percent by 2026 .To increase the rate of screenings for American Indian/Alaskan Native who are over age 45, the CNHSA will utilize digital health registries within the EHR system to identify at-risk/overdue patients, FOBT (Fecal Occult Blood Testing) awareness and targeted screening reminders. The EHR (EPIC, MyChart) will also use screening reminders and patient follow-ups for colonoscopy screening methods. Our main strategy for increasing the colorectal cancer screening rates has been promotion of the FOBT kits as a screening measure and increasing screening and risk awareness among those who decline traditional colonoscopy or meet the criteria for a FOBT kit.
- CNHSA Patients who are overdue for a colorectal cancer screening are identified within the EHR system and are added to the colorectal cancer screening registry for targeted outreach. Individuals will be notified via their elected communication preferences, including via email, MyChart app notification, and/or upon their next visit to a CNHSA healthcare provider.
- Individuals who have not completed their colorectal cancer screenings, including colonoscopies, are provided education on the importance of such cancer screenings, the process of completing the screenings, and possible alternative screening methods, such as FOBT kits. Patients deemed eligible for screening via the FOBT kits will be prescribed the test kit by a CNHSA healthcare provider at no out of pocket cost.
- Results of the FOBT kit will be shared with the ordering provider (via EPIC EHR) and the patient via their elected communication preference. Provider nursing staff will follow-up with patients requiring additional testing, follow-up visits, or additional information.
- Increase by 3 percent the number of eligible adults who received mammogram screening from 61.5 percent (FY23-24) to 64.5% percent by FY 2026. To increase the rate of American Indian/Alaskan Natives in southeastern Oklahoma who have had a mammogram in the past 2 years, the CHNSA will utilize case managers for patient follow-up and reminders. Case managers will promote patient self-exam and offer screening to women over the age of 40. CHNSA will use media and community events to promote annual screenings.
- Increase by three percent the percent of eligible adults (age 55-80) and otherwise eligible) who receive lung cancer screening from 1,439 screenings in CY 2024 to 1,482 in CY 2026. To increase the rate of screenings, the CHNSA will promote the low-dose CT scan program, use media to promote screenings and utilize case managers for patient follow-up and reminders.
- Choctaw Nation continues to increase healthcare facility access across the Reservation, leveraging the assets of CNHSA facilities and healthcare associates to ensure our communities can access critical services. Through CNO's community partnership, the Nation works diligently to increase access to healthcare services and address social determinants of health affecting our reservation.



## PRIORITY D: CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

GOAL – REDUCE THE RATE OF LATE-STAGE CANCER DIAGNOSES AND  
IMPROVE CANCER SCREENINGS AMONG CHOCTAW NATION.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	MEASURE	2026 TARGET	STRATEGY
Each year, increase by three percent, the number of eligible adults (ages 45-75) who receive a colorectal cancer screening.	60% (FY 2024)	63%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the rate of AIAN in Southeast Oklahoma ages 50+ that are screened for colon cancer within the past 10 years through CNHSA.</li> </ul>
	1,132 (2024) 1,952 (2021)	1,166	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of FOBT colorectal cancer screening methods.</li> </ul>
	1,251 (CY 2024) 1,013 (2021)	1,289	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of screening colonoscopy for colorectal cancer screenings.</li> <li>• Utilize case managers for patient follow-ups and reminders.</li> </ul>
Each year, increase by three percent, the number of eligible adults who received a mammogram screening.	61.5% (FY 23-24)  30% (FY 2022)	64.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the rate of AIAN in Southeast Oklahoma who are aged 40+ and have received a mammogram in the past two years at a CNHSA facility.</li> <li>• Utilize case managers for patient follow-ups and reminders.</li> <li>• Recommend CNHSA policy allowing self-referral mechanism for mammography services</li> </ul>
	4,071 (30%) (FY 2024)	4,193	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choctaw Nation continues to increase healthcare facility access across the Reservation, leveraging the assets of CNHSA facilities and healthcare associates to ensure our communities can access critical services. Through CNO's community partnership, the Nation works diligently to increase access to healthcare services and address social determinants of health affecting our reservation.</li> <li>• Increase the use of approved mammography screening methods.</li> <li>• Promote patient self-exam and offer screenings to women ages 40+.</li> <li>• Use media and community events to promote annual screenings.</li> </ul>
Each year, increase by three percent, the number of eligible adults (ages 55-80 and otherwise eligible) who receive lung cancer screenings.	1,439 (CY 2024)  1,409 (CY 2023)	1,482	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the use of approved lung cancer screening methods.</li> <li>• Promote the CNHSA low-dose CT lung cancer screening program across CNHSA healthcare facilities.</li> <li>• Use media to promote the screening program.</li> <li>• Utilize case managers for patient follow ups and reminders.</li> </ul>



## PRIORITY ISSUE: MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



“Fohachi,” or to rest one’s mind, dismiss or recess refers to a person’s overall psychological well-being “achukma hosh.” Mental and behavioral health includes emotional, psychological, and social aspects of an individual’s life and encompasses a range of mental states, from the absence of mental illness to the presence of positive mental health. Mental health can impact how a person thinks, feels, and behaves, as well as their ability to cope with stress, maintain relationships, and make decisions.

Mental health conditions have significant health, social, and economic consequences. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in four people will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. The Choctaw Nation recognizes that mental health is a significant public health problem that impacts the Nation’s individuals, families, and communities.

The CNHSA Behavioral Health and the Public Health Departments understand mental and behavioral health requires a comprehensive approach to addresses prevention, treatment, and support. The CHNSA, Public Health Department and other stakeholders strive to increase members’ use of mental and behavioral services. Our objective is to increase by 3 percent the number of depression screenings among the American Indian over age 18 in the Choctaw Nation Jurisdiction.

Strategies developed to meet the increase of depression screenings include the CNHSA providers increasing awareness of the importance of depression screenings. In addition, the Increased use of depression screenings in Choctaw Nation clinics, including Employee Health Clinics, and use of screenings in all clinics for scheduled and same day appointments will be utilized to meet our depression screening objective.

The Public Health team aims to increase screening awareness in adolescents (age 12-17) among Choctaw Nation and to increase use of depression screening of adolescents (age 12-17). The increased use of depression screenings for scheduled and same day appointments in the pediatric clinic will benefit the mental and behavioral well-being of Choctaw adolescents. A comprehensive approach that prioritizes mental health promotion, prevention, and care can improve the overall health and well-being of the Choctaw Nation.



## PRIORITY E: MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

*GOAL – INCREASE THE USE OF MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SCREENINGS IN CHOCTAW NATION.*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	MEASURE	2026 TARGET	STRATEGY
Each year, increase by three percent, the number of depression screenings performed among AI 18+ in the Choctaw Nation.	26,828 (CY 2024)	27,634	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of depression screenings in Choctaw Nation clinics.</li> <li>• Implement depression screenings to all clinics for both scheduled and same-day appointments.</li> <li>• Conduct depression screenings in all Employee Health clinics.</li> </ul>
Each year, increase by three percent, the number of depression screenings among adolescents ages 12-17.	2,915 (CY 2024)	2,992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase use of depression screenings of adolescents (ages 12-17 years old) in Choctaw Nation.</li> <li>• Implement depression screenings in CNHSA pediatric clinics and same-day appointments.</li> <li>• Increase awareness of importance of depression screening among adolescents ages 12-17 years old in Choctaw Nation.</li> <li>• Implemented CNO Public Health and Behavioral Health Depression Screening Best Practice Policy across CNHSA</li> </ul>

### BACKGROUND

**Stakeholder:** Choctaw Nation Behavioral Health Program, Choctaw Nation Public Health, Choctaw Nation Public Health.

#### Alignment with Health People 2030:

- Increase the proportion of primary care visits where adolescents and adults are screened for depression — MHMD-08
- Reduce cirrhosis deaths — SU-02
- Reduce the proportion of people aged 21 years and over who engaged in binge drinking in the past month — SU-10



# NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Using the National Priorities of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides a list of national objectives for improving health for all Americans over the next by 2030 (see above for the specific ones of interest to the (CNHSA). These National objectives are Healthy People 2020. The Healthy People program has created targets and examine progress to encourage collaboration across communities and sectors; to empower individuals toward making informed health decisions; and to measure the impact of prevention activities. Healthy People 2020 is the first to include Tribally specific objectives. The 2030 includes three Tribe specific objectives including:

## **PHI08:**



Increase the proportion of tribal communities that have developed a health improvement plan.  
Target-Setting Method: Percentage point improvement  
*Data Source: Public Health in Indian Country Capacity Scan (PHICCS), National Indian Health Board (NIHB)*

## **PHI03:**



Increase the number of tribal public health agencies that are accredited.  
Target-Setting Method: Projection  
*Data Source: Accredited Health Department List, Public Health Accreditation Board*

## **PHI09:**



Increase the proportion of tribal public health agencies that use Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals in continuing education for personnel.  
Target-Setting Method: Percentage point improvement  
*Data Source: Public Health in Indian Country Capacity Scan (PHICCS), National Indian Health Board (NIHB)*

The Choctaw Tribal Health Improvement Plan aligns with Healthy People 2030 and includes objectives focusing on increasing the use of mental and behavior health, improving access to and consumption of health foods, and decreasing food insecurity. While our Tribal Health Improvement Plan focuses on specific health priorities and strategies, it is important to acknowledge that the health of all our Choctaw citizens, families and communities is a priority. Choctaw Nation also recognizes the importance of community partners. We partner with schools, faith-based organizations, federal government, state government, local governments, food banks, and many other organizations.

This plan is a result of collaboration between these organizations, the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, public health leaders within the tribe, and other health professionals.



Each objective, current rate, target, and strategy was developed based on tribal assessment data that will be used to track progress and measure impact. The Public Health Department will continue to monitor the programs engaged in the plan's implementation. This public health improvement plan is a strategy aimed at improving the health of Choctaw Nation and our communities. The benefits of a public health improvement plan are as follows:

**PREVENTING DISEASE AND INJURY:** A public health improvement plan can help prevent the spread of disease and reduce the incidence of injury by promoting healthy behaviors, providing education on disease prevention, and implementing policies that encourage healthy living.

**IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE:** A public health improvement plan can improve the quality of life for members of a community by addressing the social determinants of health, such as housing, education, and employment. By improving these factors, the plan can create a healthier environment that supports the well-being of all members of the community.

**SAVING HEALTHCARE COSTS:** A public health improvement plan can save healthcare costs by preventing illness and injury and reducing the need for expensive medical treatments. By promoting preventative care and healthy behaviors, the plan can help to reduce the burden on healthcare systems and save money for both individuals and society.

**BUILDING RESILIENCE:** A public health improvement plan can help a community to become more resilient in the face of health emergencies, such as disease outbreaks or natural disasters. By establishing protocols and systems to respond to these events, a public health improvement plan can help a community to recover more quickly and effectively from health crises.

**ADDRESSING HEALTH INEQUITIES:** A public health improvement plan can help address health inequities by focusing on the specific health needs and challenges of different populations. By identifying and targeting areas with the greatest health disparities, a public health improvement plan can help to reduce health inequities and ensure that all members of the community have access to the resources they need to lead healthy lives.

In summary, a Tribal Public Health Improvement Plan is critical for promoting the health and well-being of the Choctaw Nation. It addresses objectives and strategies set forth by CNHSA and the Public Health Department. The over-arching goal of our Tribal Health Improvement Plan is to improve the quality of life of our Tribal and Community members.





## CONCLUSION

The Choctaw Nation's THIP exemplifies its commitment to servant leadership, cultural preservation and holistic well-being. By leveraging data, community voice and tradition, CNHSA is building a healthier, more resilient Choctaw Nation—today and for future generations.

## NEXT STEPS

This Tribal Health Improvement Plan (THIP) will guide strategic decisions across the Choctaw Nation. Continued community engagement, data sharing and partnership building will be vital to achieving measurable health improvements and long-term accreditation goals. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma is dedicated to enhancing the health and well-being of our communities and safeguarding the public health interests of the historic Choctaw Nation Reservation.

