

Rural Native Veterans Healthcare Navigator Program

Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 | Fiscal Year 2026



Background

Our program is built on patient navigation, a model of care in which a trained navigator guides patients through the health care system. Navigators work one-on-one with each patient to educate them, help them coordinate their care, and connect them with resources. Navigators work directly with Native Veterans living in rural areas to help them coordinate their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) care and to use VA and community resources. The Navigator also works to strengthen relationships between VA staff and the Tribal community through outreach and education.

FY 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

- 318 unique Veterans served
- 823 navigation services delivered
- 50+ outreach events across two pilot sites (Prescott, Arizona and Eureka, California)
- Accepted publication in The Journal of Rural Health
- Presentations at The Society of Federal Health Professionals, National Rural Health Association, and The Society for Implementation Research Collaboration conferences.
- Toolkit and educational materials developed and distributed
- Dashboard innovation used to identify high-need Veterans and improve care coordination
- 75% of visits involved care coordination 40+ unhouseed Veterans supported
- 40+ unhouseed Veterans supported



**HEALTH NAVIGATOR PRICILLA
GIBBS WITH COWORKERS IN THE
FIELD**

Rural Native Veterans Healthcare Navigator Program

Strategic Alignment

Supports Congressional directives for Native and rural Veteran care; Advances VA Strategic Goals one and two: access and holistic health; Reinforces VA–Tribal Memorandum of agreements and partnerships with The Office of Tribal Government Relations, The Indian Health Service, and Tribal organizations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Re-established VA care for 20+ Native Veterans Assisted with transportation, records sharing, co-pay waivers, and IHS/VA coordination
- Conducted community outreach at enrollment events and stand-downs
- Presented program updates to Tribal leaders and community stakeholders



NEXT STEPS (FY 2026)

- Expand to six new sites with Social Work Navigators embedded in PACT teams
- Each site serves 400+ enrolled Native Veterans
- Launch train-the-trainer model for navigator onboarding
- Revise implementation manual and quality assurance framework
- Continue evaluation and sustainability strategies