

Dave Panana

The Health Care Leader on a Mission to Make a Difference in the Lives of Native Americans.

Born in New Mexico, Dave Panana was raised on both reservations of his parents, his mother from Zia Pueblo and his father from the Pueblo of Jemez. With the humble lessons of his youth serving as the foundation for his worldview and work ethic, Dave has invested 17 years in his health care career and he's experienced the direct provision of care to patients as a nurse as well as more complex roles in designing, building, staffing, and improving/expanding health programs serving Native Americans and addressing the historical health disparities within their populations. He now serves as the chief operations officer of the Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation (KPHC), and the co-founder and chief executive officer of Owl Springs Consulting, LLC (OSC).

After receiving his BSN in 2002, Dave began a decade-long nursing career in cardiac and telemetry units for major medical centers and hospitals across New Mexico. In 2009, he assumed leadership positions with Pueblo of Jemez Health & Human Services (JHHS), where for the next five years, he sought to expand available health care services, decrease costs and increasing third-party revenue. At the same time, he kept his hands on the heart of it all—the patients—supervising medical staff and updating nursing policy and procedure, all while seamlessly executing his duties as co-chair of the Safety & Infection Control Committee, a member of the Medical Executive Committee, and chair of the Performance Improvement Committee. In 2012, he and his Medical Director led the completion efforts toward accreditation of JHHS by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC).

Located on the Santo Domingo Pueblo, KPHC is a growing P.L. 93-638 tribal health program that provides comprehensive health services to all eligible Native Americans in the surrounding communities, including medical, dental, pharmacy, behavioral health, optometry, lab and radiology services. Since 2014, Dave has committed his talent and resources toward the realization of KPHC's mission to "ensure health and wellness through excellence in healthcare, with respect for culture."



As a highly visible executive within the organization, Dave's leadership and contributions have led directly to the achievement of numerous corporate goals, including full program accreditation by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC), a 257% increase in third-party revenues and a 157% increase in organizational value as measured by assets and equity, the rapid

expansion of KPHC's facilities and staffing patterns, implementation of a new electronic health record (EHR), a 133% increase in total patient services provided per year, and four consecutive years with no annual independent financial audit findings.

Dave is also a dynamic presence on state and national levels, where he advocates tirelessly for partnerships and initiatives to improve the entire system in which health services are delivered to tribal populations. His active appointment to entities such as the Native American Tribal Advisory Committee (NATAC) in the State of New Mexico and the Tribal Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provides him access to high-level discussions and the opportunity for direct input into federal and state policy decisions. Most recently, Dave, the CEO, and the Board of Directors led an executive initiative for tribal consultation with the State of New Mexico resulting in a Medicaid State Plan Amendment (SPA) that is estimated to secure over \$55 million dollars in additional resources to Native American programs FY 2021, and over \$83 million dollars in FY 2022.

As an engaging presenter who blends the simplicity tradition with data-driven aspirations for growth and improvement, Dave is an accomplished speaker who has shared his wisdom in conferences sponsored by entities such as the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), the Indian Health Service (IHS), and the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). For his leadership and commitment, he's been honored with the *2015 Indian Health Service Director's Award (organizational)*, *2017 National Indian Health Board's National Impact Award*, and *2018 National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development 40 Under 40 Award*. We had the honor of talking with Dave to learn more about KPHC, his consulting firm, and his ongoing work to improve access to health care for Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Tell us the story of the serendipitous events that led you to a nursing career, and, ultimately, to your current role with Kewa Pueblo Health Corporation.

I wanted to go into medical school to become a doctor. My first choice was University of New Mexico, but I'd already been accepted to New Mexico State University, so I decided to go there. When I arrived, the guidance counselor told me they didn't have a medical school, but I could start with initial classes there and transfer to med school. The other medical degree they had was nursing, which I selected, and I never looked back. During my nursing career, and then my leadership roles, I developed a greater understanding of the systemic issues and challenges facing both the patient and health care organizations. I have always felt health care administration was about politics and money—and I still do. As COO of KPHC, I keep our focus on the patients and communities we serve as our central purpose, and this most definitely is informed by having worked so closely with the people, tribal leadership, governors and Tribal Council. I also serve on the board of a major

hospital, and I advocate at the federal level with CMS, HHS, CDC, and our partners at the IHS to continue to stress the importance of tribal consultation at the state and federal levels and the fulfillment of Federal Trust Responsibilities.

Tell us a bit more about KPHC.

The development of our corporation's strategic plan is our guide by which we attempt to address community-specific health care disparities and positively impact the health of our population we serve. Access to quality care is one of the biggest barriers for our tribal communities, we address this by expanding capital infrastructure, staffing, improving our EMR system, installation of fiberoptic cable connectivity, and having our facility AAAHC accredited in 2021. Our operation budget has changed from 75% federally funded/25% third party revenue to 60% third-party revenue/40% federal funding. We provide outpatient primary care, medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, radiology, public health. We also have specialty services on site—OBGYN, endocrinology, nephrology, audiology, dietary, and others.

KPHC has grown from a struggling corporation to a thriving health care organization in just seven years under your direction. How were you able to accomplish this?

When I got here in 2014, most didn't think we were going to survive as a new tribal organization. Now we're blazing trails. While some tribes have gaming revenue to draw from, we do not, so everything we've accomplished is built off a solid tribal health care business strategy. The support of the community, Tribal Council and our Health Board is essential to our success. We've formed better business partnerships with major hospitals, expanded our services and facilities, and increased our patient volumes year after year. The key to our ability to accomplish this is our focus on sustainability—increasing our third-party revenue, and re-investing it into a 37,000-square-foot expansion, equipment, and hiring more providers or specialty contractors to provide services here locally. We're impacting health care for generations by building a sustainable health care system that will be proactive, not reactive, that will be preventative, and lead to healthier lives.

Tell us about Owl Springs Consulting and how you're helping tribal health care facilities.

I co-founded OSC in 2016 with the vision of "Tribal Sovereignty through Self-Determination" and a mission of building sustainable 638 health care systems that serve the American Indian/Alaskan Native communities. We provide services to support the establishment, sustainability, and expansion of health care services in tribal communities, offering direct consultation, seminars,



CEO & COO



training, corporate meeting planning, and conference management services. I really love working with 638 facilities because it truly is an exercise of our tribal sovereignty.

OSC also assists outside health care providers by making connections with tribal facilities, and helping these larger entities understand the uniqueness of tribal health care business. Creating better business partners will build a system that will truly impact the health care services for our Native American communities. I also established the Advancing Tribal Health Care Conference (ATHC) to help 638 facilities grow and thrive in their own communities. We engage national and local speakers, and the event allows tribal facilities to network with outside health care entities and connect with others who can help with any number of issues—provider recruitment, business operations, technology, billing, data, etc. In the end, I want to feel I have made a positive impact in the world and have my children/family proud of the work I have done.

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