



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Media Contact:

Sacha Almanza

[ONHSPublicrelationsmarketing@osagehealth.org](mailto:ONHSPublicrelationsmarketing@osagehealth.org)

(539) 212-2525

### Osage Nation Health Board Celebrates Four Years of Growth, Innovation, and Impact

**Pawhuska, OK** – In May 2026, the Osage Nation’s Health Board Authority, **Si-Si A-Pe-Txa (SSAPT)** - translated as **“The Healing Place”** - proudly celebrates four years of transformational growth in healthcare and wellness services for the Osage people. Created through the visionary passage of the **Health Care Reform Act of 2022** by the Osage Congress and signed into law by Chief Geoffrey Standing Bear, SSAPT represents the Osage Nation’s commitment to exercising its sovereign right to govern and strengthen its own healthcare system. What began as a bold step toward self-governance has evolved into one of the most significant healthcare transformations in Tribal history. Today, SSAPT stands as a powerful example of what can be accomplished through strategic leadership, accountability, and a deep commitment to community health and wellness.

#### Building a Stronger Healthcare System

Since 2022, SSAPT has undergone a dramatic transformation across every level of operation. One of the earliest successes came through the complete turnaround of the Title VI Elder Nutrition Program. After numerous service and nutrition quality complaints, new leadership quickly reorganized, improved oversight, and with a very dedicated staff now administer a peerless service for the Tribal Elders and other clients. At the same time, SSAPT successfully transitioned into an independent healthcare Tribal enterprise - implementing new accounting, payroll, procurement, human resources, finance, and information technology systems. These major infrastructure improvements included millions of dollars in investments in upgraded software, networking, and operational software systems. Despite the scale of these tectonic transitions, SSAPT has earned clean audits for the past three consecutive years - an achievement recognized repeatedly by independent auditors conducting both governmental and enterprise annual audits.

#### Expanding Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

A major milestone for the Osage Nation Health System was the consolidation and expansion of behavioral health and substance abuse recovery services. Thanks to pandemic era funding, counseling and residential treatment programs that were once scattered across the reservation were successfully centralized into one centralized, state-of-the-art campus location. SSAPT leadership also worked closely with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority to resolve longstanding billing compliance issues inherited from prior leadership. Through a successful corrective action and aggressive “get well” plan, the organization dramatically reduced financial liability and restored operational stability. Today, the program is thriving. The Osage Nation Counseling Center recently received near-perfect accreditation survey results from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) - the Tribe’s best ever - and continues progressing toward full credentialing and privileging with insurance providers and other payors of healthcare services.

### **Rapid Growth in Employment and Services**

In 2022, the Osage Nation health system employed approximately 65 individuals. Today, that number has grown to 260 employees, including specialty providers and other healthcare specialists, adding high paying healthcare jobs in the area along with other significant area economic impacts.

The workforce reflects SSAPT's commitment to Native employment and leadership development:

- More than 100 employees are Osage Nation Tribal members serving in leadership, management, and key operational roles.
- More than 100 employees are Native Americans representing other Tribal nations.
- Approximately 60 employees come from diverse non-Native backgrounds.

This growth represents one of the largest expansions of Osage Nation employment in recent years, and in the entire history of the Osage Nation Health Programs. The future continues to be bright with the development of new healthcare initiatives, including:

- The upcoming assisted living facility in Hominy.
- Expansion of healthcare services in Skiatook via a new expansion clinic location that recently broke ground, supported by a \$3.5 million Indian Health Services grant, to expand care access and strengthen the healthcare footprint for Tribal members living in the Southeast corner of the Osage reservation.

### **Growth of Services through Grant Programs**

Since 2023, Osage Nation Health System has taken a strategic approach to grants management to aim at securing federal dollars to expand current services and implement new services to better serve our people. Expansions in the following programs has played a vital role in service delivery and growth:

- Diabetes
- Elder Services
- Elder Nutrition
- Family Violence
- Prevention
- Public Health Nursing

Our investment in these vital services has proven to be significantly impactful to the communities we serve through being awarded millions of dollars in administered grant services via SSAPT.

### **A Culture Focused on Employees and Excellence**

SSAPT has also prioritized employee recognition and workplace morale in ways rarely seen across Tribal programs or other enterprises. In the past four years, the organization has presented more than 290 employee awards and recognitions through:

- Monthly employee anniversary celebrations
- Birthday recognitions
- Employee appreciation programs
- Holiday and appreciation lunches
- Other activities organized by the Employee Morale Committee

Leadership believes that investing in employees directly improves patient care - and the results continue to prove that philosophy is successful!

### **Bringing Specialty Care Home**

One of SSAPT's greatest accomplishments has been dramatically improving access to specialty healthcare services. Previously, Tribal members often waited 12 to 24 months for appointments in specialties in the private sector outside the reservation, such as:

- Neurology
- Pulmonology
- Cardiology
- Podiatry
- Gerontology
- Dermatology
- Physical Therapy
- Periodontics

Today, many of these services are available on the reservation directly within the Osage Nation Health System, allowing patients to secure appointments within weeks rather than months or years. SSAPT has also expanded chronic disease management services, including:

- Same-day diabetic care appointments
- Integrated dental, optometry, and primary care access
- Nutrition consultations
- Fitness consultations
- Diabetes education programs featuring kitchen teaching and healthy menu development

These programs are significantly improving prevention efforts, disease management outcomes, and overall quality of life for Tribal members. Improvements in services delivery with Dental and Optometry represent the most expansive services in the Osage Nation's history.

### **Investing in Facilities and Technology**

To support continued growth, SSAPT has expanded its facilities and operational infrastructure, including new buildings for:

- Procurement
- Maintenance
- Grants program administration
- Healthcare support services

The organization also implemented major technological advancements, including:

- A moderate complexity laboratory — the first of its kind in tribal history for expanded diagnostic testing with a "perfect" CLIA inspection!
- The Epic electronic health record system with MyChart integration, allowing patients to:
  - View appointments
  - Access test results
  - Communicate with providers
  - Improve referral coordination, continuity of care, and PRC payments

These improvements have accelerated referrals, improved patient safety, strengthened diagnostic capabilities, and enhanced overall patient experience as consistently illustrated by patient surveys and complements.

## **National Recognition and Cultural Investment**

In April 2026, a survey by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) reviewed the counseling center program for another three-year successful accreditation period. Previously in 2024, the Osage Nation Primary Residential Treatment (PRT) Center garnered recognition on the list of “America’s Best Addiction Treatment Centers” by Newsweek a Statista for excellence in substance abuse treatment services, earning national recognition for patient outcomes and program quality, and exceeding expectations in achieving remarkable results that has set a benchmark for the industry. SSAPT also secured a \$250,000 grant from Pfizer dedicated specifically to culturally related programming and healing initiatives. Investments from this funding have supported:

- Traditional sweat lodge programming
- Cultural crafts programming
- Expanded supplies and facilities
- Cultural services contractors dedicated to client wellness and recovery

These initiatives reinforce the Osage Nation’s belief that healing includes cultural identity, connection, and tradition.

## **Financial Stewardship and Strategic Leadership**

All ARPA-funded projects were completed on time, within budget, and in compliance with Tribal directives and federal requirements. SSAPT leadership also made the strategic decision to maintain alignment with the Tribe’s Human Resources employee insurance structure, rather than separating into an independent benefits system. This decision helped stabilize healthcare costs and prevented significant increases in employee insurance expenses for both Tribal government and Health System employees. As a result of strong operational management and strategic growth, SSAPT has achieved:

- Significant increases in year-over-year revenue improvement
- Significantly increased the total Third-Party revenue generation from 2022 to 2026 (in the millions)!
- Significant expansion of healthcare access and services for the Osage Nation and other serviced Tribal patients and their families

## **Growing Into the Future**

Under the leadership of its executive team and Chief Executive Officer, SSAPT continues building a healthcare system focused on the needs, values, and future of the Osage Nation. What began as a bold exercise in self-governance has become a thriving healthcare enterprise dedicated to healing, innovation, accountability, and cultural strength. As SSAPT celebrates four years of success, one message remains clear: **The future of Osage Nation Healthcare is stronger than ever - and still growing!**

## **About Osage Nation**

Osage Nation is a strong, proud, resilient, and enduring sovereign nation as demonstrated by: A viable and sustainable economy driven by Osage Nation enterprises, with the income derived from which is responsibly reinvested and reserved for future generations. A flourishing Wahzhazhe culture, a revitalized Wahzhazhe language spoken at a basic level by a vast majority of Osage Nation members, and a unique and vibrant Wahzhazhe history taught to our children and fostered, promoted, and memorialized throughout our homelands. Conservation and responsible stewardship of natural resources are balanced with sound management practices and efficient production of the mineral estate within our established territory. Highly educated tribal members supported and promoted by the Nation at the pre-school level, continuing through the postsecondary level and beyond. Physical, mental, and spiritual vitality evident amongst our Wahzhazhe people, complemented by the ongoing development of

health and wellness services. A self-determining, civically engaged society with ethically responsible government leaders who faithfully serve our Constitution and are accountable for their actions to Osage Nation members. <https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/>