

OSAGE NATION



Osage Nation Counseling Center Pawhuska, Oklahoma

Founded:	1995
Service area:	approximately 1.5 million acres in north central Oklahoma
Population:	tribal enrollment is approximately 15,760; service area includes more than 40,000 people
Source of funding:	federal, tribal
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Program Description

The Osage Nation Counseling Center (ONCC) is a “one-stop haven” for assisting victims on the Osage Nation Reservation. Between 300 and 400 adults and children who have been victims of crime receive services from ONCC each year. The center’s victim services staff comprise 10 staff members, including counselors, advocates, coordinators, and monitors. The center also has a tribal domestic violence law enforcement officer on staff.

Located in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, on the Osage Nation Reservation, ONCC currently operates the only domestic violence shelter in the state designed specifically for Native victims. However, ONCC does not limit its services to tribal members. ONCC provides victim services to people throughout Osage County (Oklahoma’s largest county), including many non-Indians. In addition to providing assistance to individual clients in crisis situations, ONCC provides education and awareness to community members about issues of domestic violence and related topics.

Comprehensive Services

Patty McHenry, Victim Service Advocate at ONCC, reports that many victims are pleasantly surprised at the extent of services provided by ONCC, including

- ◆ Crisis intervention.
- ◆ Counseling.
- ◆ Advocacy.
- ◆ Protection orders.
- ◆ Short-term emergency shelter.
- ◆ Long-term housing referrals.
- ◆ Support groups.
- ◆ Financial assistance.
- ◆ Legal assistance (for both state and tribal court systems).
- ◆ Relocation.

- ◆ Inpatient drug/alcohol treatment designed for victims of violence.

ONCC victim advocates are an important part of the criminal justice process. The advocates are trained to talk to victims, explain the judicial process, and prepare them for court. Advocates also help victims obtain protection orders. In 2002, ONCC advocates helped victims obtain more than 280 protection orders. ONCC has a unique relationship with the court system; victim advocates have an open line of communication with staff in the local court system.

In addition to victim advocacy in the legal system, ONCC offers professional counseling to assist victims in processing trauma. Counselors encourage victims of violence to talk about their experiences. For victims who have a history of drug or alcohol problems, ONCC services also include substance abuse counseling. Victims who have a substance abuse problem can talk to counselors who provide treatment and peer support in an appropriate context. For instance, counselors can provide referrals to an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group that specializes in victim issues.

Connecting to the Faith-Based Community

ONCC services include numerous connections to the local faith-based community. Many victims who seek services at ONCC have a background in traditional Osage spiritual beliefs and/or a local church community. Clients can develop an individual plan of working with the faith-based community. For clients who are seeking traditional Native spiritual connections, sweat lodge ceremonies, pipe ceremonies, and talking circles are available. ONCC also has good relationships with area churches. Shelter residents who want to attend church can receive free transportation to and from Sunday and Wednesday services. In addition, local churches have been supportive of the shelter program and often provide donations that are needed to successfully run the shelter.

Crossing Jurisdictional Boundaries

Because of the unique jurisdictional issues in Oklahoma, ONCC must work with many different entities to provide comprehensive services to victims. ONCC has initiated many memorandums of understanding and memorandums of agreement with county and local governments to prevent gaps in services. The teamwork and collaboration have resulted in a system wherein victims can receive seamless access to services and resources. The tribal government maintains a strong sense of sovereignty through its partnerships with Osage County and other state agencies.

Keys to Success

- ◆ Collect data. The Osage Nation Counseling Center has been able to show concrete results by using demographics and statistics, while still protecting victim confidentiality.
- ◆ Make effective use of tribal sovereignty. Sovereignty and cross-jurisdictional collaboration are not mutually exclusive.
- ◆ Diversify funding sources. ONCC has developed long-range strategy and sustainability plans to strengthen the lasting legacy of the programs.
- ◆ Encourage faith-based activities that support victims in healing.

Quotes

Learn how to make the grants work together. Be critical in how your programs complement one another. Collaboration is important.

—Rosemary Shaw
Director

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Advocates need to know how to identify a victim who is struggling with a drug or alcohol problem so that they can receive treatment.

—Rosemary Shaw
Director

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