

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Vaya Health Honors National Native American Heritage Month,
Strengthens Partnerships with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians**

ASHEVILLE, NC - In celebration of the contributions of Native American individuals and cultures, Vaya Health reaffirms its commitment to the well-being and health equity of Tribal members, particularly ongoing partnerships with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) and Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority (CIHA).

Vaya currently serves approximately 5,075 Tribal members, providing access to comprehensive behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability services. Vaya actively works to ensure that Tribal members receive culturally competent care while respecting the sovereignty of the EBCI.

“Recognizing National Native American Heritage Month is more than a symbolic gesture for Vaya – it’s a reminder of the unique needs of Native American communities and our ongoing efforts to address health disparities,” said Davan Wildcatt, Tribal Provider Network Contract Manager for Vaya Health. “By collaborating with the EBCI and CIHA, we can continue to support and improve the health outcomes of Native Americans across the state.”

Vaya has been actively engaged with the EBCI through numerous initiatives designed to support Tribal members’ health and wellness, including:

- **Child Welfare:** Vaya collaborated with the CIHA and the NC Department of Health and Human Services to address child mental health needs in the Native American population. Vaya participated in the feasibility study that was a part of the plan submitted to NCDHHS to secure funding and looks forward to this continued partnership to develop a Child Facility-Based Crisis Center.
- **Health Equity Council:** In March 2024, Vaya’s Health Equity Council invited an external stakeholder to join the Council to represent Tribal interests and help identify health disparities affecting Tribal members.

- **Board Representation:** In October 2023, Vaya’s Board of Directors elected an enrolled member of the EBCI to join the governing board, certifying ongoing Tribal representation at the organizational leadership level.
- **Healthy Opportunities Pilot:** Vaya has partnered with the EBCI and CIHA to develop and implement the [Healthy Opportunities Pilot](#) (HOP), which offers Tribal members future access to HOP services. Vaya is scheduled to continue strategizing and collaborating with the Tribe and the hospital to support an effective and expeditious launch of pilot services for Tribal members.

Vaya Health is committed to building stronger partnerships with Tribal communities and organizations to advance health equity for Native American populations and implement innovative solutions to meet the health needs of Tribal members.

About Vaya Health

Vaya Health is a specialty managed care organization and local government agency that oversees publicly funded health care services across a 32-county region of North Carolina for people with significant behavioral health needs, intellectual/developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries. Vaya manages Medicaid, federal, state, and local funding to meet member and community needs while advancing whole-person health. Together with members, contracted providers, and local partners, we’re moving forward to a healthier North Carolina. Vaya Health can be found online at vayahealth.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/VayaHealth/, on X (formerly known as Twitter) [@VayaHealth](https://twitter.com/VayaHealth), and on LinkedIn at linkedin.com/company/vaya-health.

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