

NEW FACILITIES FOR LITTLE SHELL TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

Learn how Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians lowered costs
and redesigned facilities for person-centric care



Southcentral Foundation's Learning Institute consults with organizations on a wide variety of topics related both to the direct provision of healthcare and other areas that contribute to organizational functioning. Following is a case study of SCF's consulting work with Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians, a federally recognized tribe of Ojibwe people in Montana. SCF consulted with Little Shell on the design of their new facilities, supporting them in developing spaces for medical, dental, vision, and behavioral care, as well as traditional medicine, a pharmacy, and a lab.



Discover Solutions:

When SCF began consulting with Little Shell, their architect had already drawn up their original plans. SCF's subject matter experts reviewed the plan and gave recommendations, and worked with the architect through phone consultation to make live changes. SCF's experience has shown that beautiful facilities contribute to customer pride, honor, dignity, and self-confidence, and that facility design directly influences clinical care and can enable more effective clinical interactions. SCF was able to offer advice on these topics through the consulting process, and share the general philosophy of facility design in the Nuka System of Care.

We began planning the facility with care team concepts, keeping in mind how these teams will need to be located in close proximity to one another to ensure efficient and effective communication for the best care of our members. We really wanted to have an open concept, but with respect to the privacy of our members. We also wanted to keep in mind how care for our members may evolve and how we could design spaces to be convertible for possible multiple uses.

We have great respect for Southcentral Foundation and the experience of their team, and their success speaks for itself. We wanted to do this, do it right and have the best design for the care of our members.

-Molly Wendland, Health Director, Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians



Learn SCF's Approach:

SCF gave Little Shell an extensive virtual tour of our facilities, led by our Vice President of Medical Services, Dr. Doug Eby. Doug not only has experience with facility design at SCF, but also has the clinical expertise to discuss the flow of appointments and how the physical spaces can support both efficiency and relationship-building between customers and providers. SCF also shared blueprints from our own buildings, and Doug talked through why we had built them the way we did. Discussions covered more than just building design and structure, going in-depth about facility details. For example, at SCF, chairs in exam rooms and talking rooms are level between the provider and the customer-owner, to reflect the fact that health care is an equal partnership at SCF.

Working with SCF was such an open and honest experience. The team really took the time to consider our needs and the space that we had available and come up with a logical and workable plan. They had knowledge of how the teams would actually use the space and move through it. So many times, spaces are designed by others who do not actually work within the space. It was a very organic experience, and we were able to build on each other's ideas.

One example of this was seeing appointments as more of a conversation and a partnership, and creating a comfortable, safe space in rooms for patients to have that. Really creating space to reduce the power differential and create a cooperative and co-learning relationship for the best outcomes for our members. Hybrid rooms, and the fact that many appointments don't require an exam table.

They also helped with thinking about how teams communicate and how to arrange spaces to encourage that.

-Molly Wendland

Transform the System:

Little Shell is anticipating the opening of its new facilities, with spaces designed to support the provision of high-quality, efficient care that reflects the values of the people they serve. SCF is proud to have worked with Little Shell in the design of their new facilities, and it was a privilege to support them throughout the process.

Working with SCF helped us find cost savings in the new facilities. For example, we did not need all of the exam tables and equipment we planned for because appointments are more of a conversation. Another factor was to use the space more efficiently; we needed to reduce clutter. Having trash bins on pull out carts, for example.

Our facility will open in late Fall of 2021, but this process has influenced how we view appointments and approach patient care – thinking more about what might be most comfortable for our member to encourage them to be the best manager of their health.

-Molly Wendland



Prior to working with SCF, we understood and always take into consideration that workplace design significantly affects human behavior. Working with SCF helped us to create a productive and comfortable interior atmosphere which facilitates collaboration among employees and supervisors.

This design allows teams to work together to solve problems and will improve the way care is provided. We feel fortunate to have been a part of this process.

-Dale Nelson, Nelson Architects

For more information on SCF's consulting process, feel free to contact the SCF Learning Institute.