

2025 AzHHA Quality Awards

Winner summaries

Outstanding Patient/Community Impact Award:

San Carlos Apache Healthcare Corporation - This winning project focuses on improving mammogram screening rates among Native American/Alaskan Native women served by the San Carlos Apache Healthcare Corporation. In response to low screening rates and high breast cancer incidence, the organization implemented a culturally tailored Mammography Patient Navigator program, which included outreach, education, and collaboration with primary care teams. Over the course of a year, the program achieved a 39% increase in completed mammograms, with 680 screenings and 171 new patients, raising the screening rate from 29.8% to 41.2%. Key strategies included walk-in appointments, direct radiology access, and culturally appropriate education delivered by a Native Apache speaker. Despite challenges like transportation barriers, the initiative demonstrated sustainable improvements in preventive care and patient engagement.

Sage Memorial Hospital- This winning project describes Sage Memorial Hospital's "Chizh for Elders" initiative, which delivers firewood to Navajo elders in remote communities to prevent cold-related health issues during winter. Using a PDSA model and Kotter's change framework, the program integrated culturally respectful practices, community partnerships, and logistical planning to align wood deliveries with clinical visits. In its first season, 48 elder households received wood and safety visits, resulting in zero cold-weather-related hospitalizations and a 100% satisfaction rate. The initiative also strengthened relationships with local chapter houses, reduced non-emergency EMS calls, and enhanced the visibility of community health representatives. Embedded into the hospital's winter readiness protocol, the program is sustainable and replicable for other rural and tribal healthcare systems.

Valley View Medical Center - This winning project focuses on improving hand hygiene compliance at Valley View Medical Center to reduce healthcare-associated infections. Using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) methodology, the team implemented updated policies, staff education, and a structured observation process, including weekly clinical meetings and leadership accountability. Compliance rates rose from 62% in early 2023 to 92% in 2025, with monthly observations increasing from 379 to over 700. These improvements contributed to a significant reduction in preventable harms, with the hospital's harm index dropping from 4.70 in 2021 to 1.56 in 2025. The initiative emphasized cultural change, staff engagement, and evidence-based practices like the WHO's Five Moments for Hand Hygiene.

Havasu Regional Medical Center- This winning project describes Havasu Regional Medical Center's initiative to reduce blood culture contamination in its emergency department using the PIVO™ Pro Needle-free Blood Collection Device. After identifying contamination rates of 5.3% in 2023 and 2.9% in 2024—well above the hospital's goal of ≤1%—a multidisciplinary team implemented a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle to trial the PIVO™ device. During a 10-day validation period, 90 blood cultures were drawn with zero contamination, demonstrating both clinical efficacy and cost savings. The initiative also improved patient satisfaction, with Press Ganey scores rising in areas such as "skill in taking blood" and

“respect for culture/race/religious needs.” The hospital plans to expand PIVO™ use to inpatient units and sustain improvements through ongoing training, audits, and oversight.

Tucson Medical Center- This winning project describes TMC’s Tucson Collaborative Community Care (TC-3), a partnership between Tucson Medical Center and the Tucson Fire Department aimed at reducing non-emergency 911 calls and improving health outcomes for vulnerable populations. TC-3 uses a multidisciplinary team to assess individual needs and provide immediate support, connecting clients to long-term services such as housing, behavioral health, and food assistance. Through data-driven planning and evidence-based practices like trauma-informed care and harm reduction, the program has significantly reduced emergency department visits and hospital readmissions. Since 2018, TC-3 has avoided nearly \$2 million in EMS costs and improved quality of life for 88.5% of its clients. The initiative emphasizes community collaboration, root cause analysis, and upstream investment in preventive care to build long-term resilience.

Cornerstone Specialty Hospital Tucson – now called Vista Specialty Hospital of Tucson - This winning project showcases Cornerstone Specialty Hospital’s journey toward becoming a High Reliability Organization (HRO) by improving ventilator liberation rates and reducing self-decannulations. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, daily huddles, and visual management tools, the respiratory therapy team implemented proactive strategies such as risk identification, staff education, and enhanced communication. These efforts led to a significant increase in ventilator liberation rates from 53.74% in 2023 to 80.52% in 2024, alongside a consistent decline in self-decannulation incidents. The initiative emphasized psychological safety, sensitivity to operations, and resilience, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Ultimately, the project enhanced patient safety, accelerated recovery, and empowered staff to deliver high-quality, patient-centered care.

Clinical Excellence

Mount Graham Regional Medical Center - This winning project highlights Mount Graham Regional Medical Center’s implementation of a Transition to Practice (TTP) Program to address RN retention and improve patient safety in its Med/Surg and Observation units. Faced with staffing shortages and rising reliance on agency nurses, the hospital partnered with AzHHA to launch a structured, evidence-based onboarding program for new graduates. The initiative fostered psychological safety, strengthened mentorship, and improved team cohesion, resulting in reduced RN labor costs and the elimination of traveler staff. Through continuous learning, leadership development, and collaborative problem-solving, the program transformed departmental culture from task-focused to relationship-centered. These efforts led to enhanced patient outcomes, increased job satisfaction, and sustainable improvements in nurse recruitment and retention.

Valley View Medical Center - This winning project describes Valley View Medical Center’s MASH (Multiple Avenues for Successful Health Care) program, a two-week immersive medical shadowing experience for high school seniors. Designed to address local healthcare workforce shortages, the

program pairs students with professionals across departments like ER, ICU, OB, and pharmacy, offering hands-on exposure and mentorship. Students undergo a competitive application process and receive structured onboarding, including scrubs, orientation, and department rotations. Continuous feedback, simulation labs, and alumni tracking help refine the program and demonstrate its long-term impact on college readiness and career development. Many participants return to work in their communities, with some even joining the same hospital where they first experienced healthcare through MASH.

Havasu Regional Medical Center - This winning project describes Havasu Regional Medical Center's enhanced nurse residency program, designed to improve graduate nurse retention and reduce turnover. By incorporating structured orientation, mentorship, clinical simulations, and one-on-one coaching, the program addresses the challenges new nurses face transitioning from academia to practice—especially those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since launching the revised program in early 2024, graduate nurse retention increased by 21%, rising from 68.4% to 89.4% by year-end. The initiative also improved staff engagement, psychological safety, and recognition, as reflected in Culture of Safety and Engagement (CoSe) survey results. Building on this success, HRMC introduced preceptor, and fellowship programs and plans to expand support through career pathways and specialty training initiatives.

Onvida Health - This winning project describes Onvida Health's Transition to Practice (TTP) Program, designed to improve nurse retention by supporting students, nurse externs, and new graduate nurses through structured mentorship, education, and individualized orientation. The initiative includes specialized coordinator roles, preceptor training, and the O.N.E. C.L.E.A.R. Pathway, a five-year professional development plan tailored to each nurse's experience level. Since its implementation, nurse retention rates have increased from 83% in 2022 to 90% in 2024, with nurse externs showing strong retention beyond the three-year mark. The program also expanded support to allied health professionals through portfolio development and evidence-based practice workshops. By fostering emotional support, gradual skill development, and community engagement, Onvida Health has created a sustainable, growth-oriented environment for its nursing workforce.

Top Overall Excellence:

Havasu Regional Medical Center was honored with the 2025 AzHHA Quality Awards Top Overall Excellence Award for its transformative Nurse Residency Program, which dramatically increased Graduate Nurse retention from 68.4% to 89.4% in just one year. Recognizing post-pandemic burnout and turnover—especially among new graduates—the team redesigned its residency framework to move beyond education and focus on belonging, mentorship, and psychological safety. Through one-on-one nurse coaching, extended mentorship relationships, simulation-based learning, and strong leadership engagement, residents not only gained clinical competency but reported feeling deeply supported and committed to long-term careers at HRMC. The success of this model has already expanded into Preceptor and Fellowship programs, ensuring leadership growth and specialty development across the workforce. Built on continuous PDSA refinement and aligned with the hospital's mission and values, the program now serves as a blueprint for sustainable workforce stabilization that can be used statewide. HRMC's approach proved that retention is not just about training—it's about connection—and that is why it stood out as this year's most exemplary presentation.