



2023 NHCAA

Awards Program

November 7, 2023



NHCAA



Law Enforcement Collaboration to Address Sober Home Fraud Schemes Targeting Indigenous Communities

The National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association is proud to recognize the exemplary efforts and remarkable collaboration of the **Federal Bureau of Investigation**, the **Gallup New Mexico Police Department**, and the **Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety** with its **2023 Excellence in Public Awareness Award**.

The Award team represents a coalition of like-minded community partners who worked together to address critical public safety issues. The multi-agency team identified an emerging health care fraud scheme impacting several communities and alerted the public to the danger—most critically, the unhoused Indigenous peoples that the scheme was designed to target. Beyond the important investigative success in identifying and unraveling the complexities of the fraud scheme, this effort also helped reunite missing Indigenous persons with their loved ones.

In 2022 the FBI launched its Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons Initiative (MMIP), a pilot project aimed at understanding the scope of the missing Indigenous population across New Mexico and the Navajo Nation. Tangentially, it was discovered that a related residential behavioral health facility (RBHF) fraud scheme was developing in Arizona.

The FBI trained law enforcement agencies on conducting comprehensive missing persons investigations, including looking for overlap with criminal activity. Officials located near the Navajo Nation discerned an interrelationship between New Mexico and Arizona regarding the transient nature of missing Indigenous persons, particularly those experiencing homelessness. Reports of abductions relating to a health care fraud scheme began to circulate among community partners.

Police officers from the Gallup Police Department were the first to notify the FBI Albuquerque Field Office of unhoused Indigenous persons disappearing from the streets of Gallup, New Mexico. It was revealed that they were targeted, recruited, and transported to sober living homes in Arizona, where the scheme primarily involved billing for services not rendered, including counseling and substance abuse treatment. In some instances, sober home residents were provided drugs and alcohol and at least one individual sadly died.

The Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety (DPS) issued public warnings about the fraud scheme and made multiple trips to RBHFs in the Phoenix area to search for missing persons and perform welfare and safety checks. The DPS and Gallup PD actively engaged with fraud victims and learned the methods used by sober home recruiters.

The collective efforts of the FBI, Gallup PD, and the Navajo Nation DPS garnered significant media coverage, locally as well as nationally, involved multiple websites, social media campaigns, awareness briefings, published reports, surveys, trainings, face-to-face engagement with Indigenous and homeless communities, and many other public-facing resources.

NHCAA commends the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Gallup Police Department, and the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety for their success in raising public awareness of the exploitive nature of health care fraud and how it impacts families and communities.

CONGRATULATIONS TO

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

United States Department of Justice

Garrett Canterbury, *Tactical Specialist*

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Carol A. York, *Tactical Specialist*

GALLUP POLICE DEPARTMENT

Criminal Investigations Division

Anthony Seciwa, *Lieutenant*

Andrea Tsosie, *Sergeant*

NAVAJO NATION POLICE DEPARTMENT

Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety

Reycita Jean Billie, *PSAP Supervisor, MMIP Liaison*

Rowland Dash, *Sergeant*

Daryl T. Noon, *Chief of Police*