

Ascension Recovery Services Develops New Tribal Lands Initiative Through Partnership with ECHAGA Corporation

National Tribal lands partnership advances plans for a 48-bed adolescent behavioral health and residential treatment facility serving Oglala Lakota youth

PINE RIDGE RESERVATION, SD, UNITED STATES, August 6, 2026

/EINPresswire.com/ -- Ascension Recovery Services (Ascension RS), the leading national behavioral health consulting, development and management company, announced that it has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding

process with ECHAGA Corporation, a Section 16 economic development nonprofit corporation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST), to support early-stage development planning for a proposed adolescent behavioral health and residential treatment facility on the Pine Ridge Reservation.



Ascension Recovery Services

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The partnership marks Ascension Recovery Services' continued commitment to helping Tribal Nations develop sustainable, culturally responsive behavioral health infrastructure in their own communities.

ECHAGA is advancing plans for a transformative behavioral health and rehabilitation campus designed to address critical gaps in youth mental health and substance use disorder treatment for the Oglala Lakota Nation. The

proposed project includes an approximately 48-bed, 44,051-square-foot adolescent behavioral health and residential treatment facility with an estimated total project cost of approximately \$45 million.

The proposed facility is intended to expand access to culturally grounded behavioral health services for tribal youth, incorporating Oglala Lakota traditions, ceremonies and customs as part of healing. It would also reduce the need for off-reservation treatment placements, strengthen access to residential treatment and psychiatric services, create quality jobs and workforce development opportunities on the Reservation, and establish a financially sustainable healthcare enterprise benefiting the Oglala Sioux Tribe and surrounding communities.

“Tribal communities should not have to send young people far from home, family, culture and community to receive the behavioral health care they need,” said Douglas M. Leech, founder and chief executive officer, Ascension Recovery Services. “This MOU with ECHAGA represents the beginning of a thoughtful development process rooted in partnership, feasibility and long-term sustainability. Our role is to bring the operational, financial, regulatory and development expertise needed to help turn an important vision into a viable path forward while honoring the leadership and priorities of the Oglala Lakota Nation.”

Ascension partnered with Tribal leadership, the Chairman of ECHAGA, Bat Pourier, and ECHAGA’s CEO Gary Ruse in developing the MOU and the project’s framework.

Through the initial phase of work, Ascension will support ECHAGA with feasibility and market analysis, preliminary startup budgeting and operational pro forma development, capital stack and financing strategy, and preliminary licensing and regulatory evaluation. The process is intended to help determine the clinical, financial and operational viability of the proposed facility while the parties evaluate future long-term development and management agreements. Ascension RS’s work may include analysis of market demand, regional behavioral health gaps, referral sources, payer environment, reimbursement structures, Medicaid, commercial insurance, Indian Health Service and tribal reimbursement considerations, staffing models, census ramp projections, debt service coverage, funding pathways, New Markets Tax Credits, USDA and BIA loan guarantee opportunities, philanthropic funding and applicable South Dakota licensing and accreditation requirements.

“For too long, families across the Pine Ridge Reservation have watched young people struggle with substance use and mental health needs without an appropriate treatment option close to home,” said James Cross, OST Councilman and chairman of the OST Economic and Business Development Committee. “ECHAGA has spent more than two and a half years advancing this vision and carefully evaluating the right partner. Ascension Recovery Services brings experience working with Native American Tribes, but just as important, this facility can be shaped around our own traditions, ceremonies and customs. I am optimistic that this combined effort by ECHAGA and the Oglala Sioux Tribe will change the lives of our youth for decades to come.”

Ascension RS provides comprehensive behavioral health development and management support nationally, including feasibility studies, business planning, financial modeling, capital stack development, licensing and accreditation preparation, clinical programming, staffing model development, payer contracting, operational management, regulatory compliance, revenue cycle

oversight, quality assurance and long-term strategic growth.

“This is the kind of work that requires more than a business plan,” shared Leech. “It requires trust, cultural humility, operational discipline and a shared commitment to building something that can serve youth and families for generations. We are grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside ECHAGA and the Oglala Sioux Tribe during this important first phase.”

About Ascension Recovery Services

Ascension Recovery Services is a national behavioral health consulting, development and management company specializing in the development, capitalization, licensing, accreditation, launch and operation of behavioral health treatment centers across the United States. Ascension supports organizations and communities in building clinically strong, financially sustainable treatment programs that expand access to care and improve long-term recovery outcomes. For more information, please visit www.ascensionrs.com.

About ECHAGA Corporation

ECHAGA Corporation is a Section 16 economic development nonprofit corporation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe organized under applicable tribal law. ECHAGA pursues economic development and healthcare initiatives for the benefit of the Oglala Lakota community, including projects designed to strengthen infrastructure, expand opportunity and improve access to essential services on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

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