



CASE STUDY

**TURNING
TEMPORARY
CLINICIANS INTO
A MORE
SUSTAINABLE
WORKFORCE**

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Executive Summary

A large tribal healthcare system implemented Adaptive Workforce Solutions' Employer of Record (EOR) program to reduce agency reliance while preserving control over its workforce strategy.

The program delivered **\$3.5 million** in savings, reduced hourly rates by **20–30%**, and transitioned 156 clinicians across nursing, provider, allied, and non-clinical roles. By enabling a compliant, hospital-directed hiring pathway, the organization improved cost discipline, increased flexibility, and maintained operational control.

What is Employer of Record?

Adaptive's EOR service provides hospitals and health systems with a compliant way to engage clinicians they identify through a variety of channels, including referrals, former employees, internal candidate pools, or travelers completing an assignment.

Hospitals retain full control over clinician selection, compensation, and day-to-day management. Adaptive serves as the legal employer, managing payroll, benefits, taxes, credentialing, and regulatory compliance. The result is a more predictable, lower-cost alternative to agency staffing that preserves workforce control and operational flexibility.

The Challenge

Cherokee Nation Health Services (CNHS) operates one of the largest tribally operated healthcare systems in the United States, delivering comprehensive inpatient, outpatient, and specialty care across multiple hospitals and clinics in northeastern Oklahoma. As a sovereign healthcare system, CNHS is committed to maintaining local control over its workforce, clinical operations, and long-term care delivery strategy.

Like many healthcare organizations, CNHS faced increasing labor costs associated with managing a diverse mix of staffing models across nursing, physician, and allied health roles. Agency staffing played an important role in supporting care delivery and maintaining flexibility, but it also introduced higher unit costs and administrative complexity for certain positions and use cases.

At the same time, CNHS maintained multiple clinician pipelines, including referrals, former employees, internal candidate pools, and clinicians with prior experience in its facilities and communities. Existing workforce structures did not consistently provide a compliant, efficient way to engage these clinicians directly while preserving flexibility across the broader staffing ecosystem or aligning workforce decisions with organizational priorities and community needs.

CNHS Leadership Sought a Solution That Would:

- Support workforce self-determination by preserving local hiring authority
- Reduce agency dependence and hourly labor costs
- Enable compliant, rapid engagement of clinicians identified through hospital-directed channels
- Minimize administrative burden while maintaining regulatory rigor

The Strategy

To advance these goals, CNHS partnered with Adaptive Workforce Solutions to introduce EOR as a complementary employment model within its broader workforce strategy.

Through Adaptive’s EOR program, CNHS established a compliant framework to engage clinicians identified through hospital-directed channels, including referrals, internal candidate pools, former employees, and clinicians with prior experience in CNHS facilities or communities. CNHS retained full authority over clinician selection, scheduling, and compensation, while Adaptive assumed employer responsibility, including payroll, benefits administration, taxes, credentialing, and ongoing compliance.

This approach enabled CNHS to improve cost discipline and administrative efficiency for targeted positions, while continuing to leverage agency staffing where needed to support surge capacity, specialized coverage, and market-driven demand. By expanding its employment options, CNHS strengthened workforce self-determination, preserved operational autonomy, and gained a scalable framework for managing contingent labor.

Financial Impact

By utilizing Adaptive’s Employer of Record program, CNHS has generated more than **\$3.54 million** in verified labor cost savings through 2025, based on realized differences between agency bill rates and fully loaded EOR employment costs. These savings reflect actual program performance across six consecutive years and demonstrate sustained financial impact across varying labor market conditions, including periods of peak rate volatility.

Savings are calculated as the difference between agency bill rates and fully burdened EOR employment costs, multiplied by actual hours worked during each reporting period.

Program Impact at a Glance		EOR Savings by Calendar Year		
\$3.54M	\$22/Hour	Year	EOR Clinicians	Avoided Agency Costs
Total Verified Savings	Average Savings	2020	10	\$667,822.68
		2021	29	\$529,787.88
		2022	56	\$1,350,413.56
		2023	13	\$355,982.40
		2024	31	\$391,761.72
		2025	17	\$245,033.64
		TOTAL	156	\$3,540,801.88
20–30%	156			
Typical Rate Reduction	Clinicians Engaged			

Cumulative savings through 2025 exceeded **\$3.5 million**, reflecting consistent rate advantages achieved through disciplined workforce management. While annual savings fluctuate based on utilization levels, assignment duration, and broader market dynamics, the EOR model has consistently delivered measurable cost control and pricing predictability compared to traditional agency staffing.

Savings have been realized across nursing, allied health, physician, and advanced practice roles, demonstrating the model’s applicability across the full clinical workforce. Physician engagements have generated the highest per-assignment financial impact, while nursing and allied health roles have driven the majority of cumulative savings through consistent, scalable application. The distribution of savings across both high-cost physician roles and high-volume nursing and allied positions demonstrates that EOR functions as both a targeted cost-reduction tool and a scalable workforce strategy.

Across core clinical roles, EOR engagements have typically produced **20–30% reductions in hourly labor costs**. Across all roles, EOR engagements generated an average weighted savings of approximately **\$22 per hour** compared to traditional agency staffing. For nursing and allied health positions specifically, documented hourly savings commonly ranged from approximately **\$12 to \$30 per hour**, depending on specialty and assignment duration.

At the individual engagement level, these rate advantages frequently translated into **five-figure savings per clinician**, with certain multi-month assignments generating **more than \$40,000 in agency cost avoidance**. Collectively, these outcomes demonstrate that Employer of Record is not a short-term cost containment tactic, but a repeatable, scalable workforce strategy capable of delivering durable financial performance.

How Savings are Distributed

High-Impact Roles

Physician engagements generated the highest per-assignment savings, with several assignments producing six-figure cost reductions.

Scaleable Impact

Nursing and allied health roles drove the majority of total savings through consistent, system-wide application.

Workforce Stability, Flexibility, and Sovereignty

Beyond cost savings, the EOR program supported CNHS’s broader commitment to workforce self-determination by creating greater continuity within its contingent workforce. By enabling the organization to continue engaging clinicians already familiar with its facilities and communities, CNHS strengthened cultural alignment, improved retention, and reduced disruption to care delivery.

The EOR model allowed CNHS to exercise greater control over its workforce strategy while maintaining compliance, transparency, and operational efficiency. This approach reinforced CNHS’s ability to align workforce decisions with organizational priorities and community needs, rather than external market pressures. The result was a staffing approach that balanced financial stewardship with sovereignty, flexibility, and consistent, high-quality patient care.



“Adaptive’s Employer of Record service has had a measurable impact for CNHS, saving millions of dollars while giving us greater control and continuity across our workforce.”



– Sharon Smallwood, MD

*Physician – Director, Medical Quality Management
Cherokee Nation Health Services*

Results shown reflect actual realized savings during each reporting period and may vary based on role mix, utilization, assignment duration, and market conditions.

About Adaptive Workforce Solutions

Adaptive Workforce Solutions is a national healthcare workforce management company specializing in contingent workforce programs for hospitals and healthcare organizations. We partner with health systems to streamline workforce operations, improve cost discipline, and expand flexibility through transparent, structured workforce solutions.

Operating as an independent, vendor-neutral partner rather than a staffing agency, Adaptive connects hospitals to a network of more than 300 independent staffing firms across nursing, allied health, physician, and advanced practice roles. This approach promotes competition, transparency, and fair market pricing while preserving access to agency staffing.

What Makes Adaptive's Employer of Record Service Different

- Built specifically for healthcare organizations, not a generic payroll solution
- Backed by deep experience supporting hospitals, health systems, and tribal healthcare
- Transparent pricing with no agency markups or conversion fees

Take the Next Step

Ready to see how much your organization could be saving with an Employer of Record model? Schedule a consultation to receive a customized savings analysis using our Employer of Record cost-savings calculator. We'll identify potential use cases, compare Employer of Record pricing against current agency bill rates, and outline a compliant path to sustained labor cost reduction.



Our work with Cherokee Nation Health Services goes back to 2019, and a key goal from the start was to reduce reliance on travelers in a sustainable way. The Employer of Record model made that possible by adding a cost-efficient alternative within a broader, multi-channel staffing strategy.

By introducing EOR as a complementary approach, we helped create a framework that supports cost discipline, strengthens workforce stability, and keeps decision-making where it belongs, with the health system."

- Julie O'Keefe

*President & CEO
Adaptive Workforce Solutions*



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