

## Nicole Howell



Driven by a calling, Nicole Howell dedicates her career to the memories and experiences of her grandma - a Native American facing struggles as a low income, English as a second language person.

In her grandma's legacy, a decade-long career began in the non-profit and then aging communities to fill a void by building programs, teams, infrastructures, and providing resources to educate and combat the ageism fighting against old adults. Nicole has helped cultivate change through the belief that there is both power and equity in shared leadership. She believes that powerful leadership is met with equal parts enthusiasm, engagement, and connection to the team and those you are working with. As the Executive Director for Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa, Solano, and Alameda (OSCCSA), Nicole is responsible for ensuring that the nearly 29,000 long-term care residents and their families have access to the highest level of care, respect, and above all, can live free of abuse and neglect.

"I've always had a passion for the non-profit community, but when I became part of the ombudsman services in my prior role as the Director of Operations for Ombudsman Services of San Mateo County, something just clicked. It reignited a connection and those experiences I saw my grandma facing. I quickly became a fierce advocate for seniors and dependent adults and was driven to immerse myself in culture-changing initiatives and person-centered care philosophies. It's a true honor to use my voice for those all of those in long-term care - residents, their families and those who have passed. Really, it's not just a community. It's a movement of people."

Since becoming Executive Director, Nicole has grown OSCCSA's budget nearly 600%, lowered the use of anti-psychotics in Contra Costa County by 10%, and increased facility coverage by unearthing the problems and issues that are being overlooked. She has helped spearhead many new programs in Ombudsman Services and beyond, including the Elder Justice Program Solano, Telephone Reassurance, and Friendly Visiting in Solano County, as well as Healthcare Career Pathways and Residents' Rights in Contra Costa.

Nicole and her team have distributed PPE to 15,000 residents in long-term care in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have developed The Tablet Turnover Program collecting unused tablets helping long-term care



residents connect with those outside facilities and participated in efforts for residents' rights by collaborating with local reporters to spread the word on the risks that older adults face. During the height of COVID-19, OSCCSA completed nearly 300 facility consultations and close to 200 individual consultations providing vital information and resources in Alameda County.

A Las Vegas native, Nicole attended the University of Nevada, Reno studying Political Science. As an avid speaker on all topics on elder advocacy and elder justice, she is honored to serve and be a part of the Solano Partners Against Violence as a Solano County appointed board member, a Chair of Legislative Policy for California Elder Justice Coalition, member of the Rotary Club of Walnut Creek Sunrise, a member of the Core Project Team for the Alliance to End Abuse, a member of the Council for Age-Friendly Communities–Alameda County, 2021 Walnut Creek Chair for Wine, Women, and Shoes.