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Indian and Native American Youth

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In May, 2006, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), issued Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 28-05, which expanded ETA's vision for the delivery of services to the "neediest youth" under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to include Indian and Native American youth and youth with disabilities.

Indian and Native American status is not a WIA youth eligibility factor, so WIA youth professionals should use a broad definition of Indian and Native American, such as that offered by the U.S. Census Bureau – an individual having origins in any original peoples of North, South, or Central America and who maintains tribal affiliation or attachment.

Native American youth face many unique challenges.

On and Off the Reservation

Not all Indians and Native Americans live on reservations. For example, there are about 75,000 Native Americans in Ohio but there is not a single reservation in the state. According to the 2000 census, there were about 2 million Indians and Native Americans; approximately 800,000 of those lived on reservations. Whether on or off the reservation, Indians and Native Americans face similar challenges.

Challenges for All Indians and Native Americans

- Cultural
 - Perceived discrimination
 - Stereotypes, negative attitudes, and prejudices
 - Dealing with their identity as Indians
 - Conflict between traditions and new opportunities
- Educational
 - 51% graduation rate (versus 68% for all Americans)
 - 17% of those aged 16-19 not in school and no high school diploma or equivalent (versus 9% for all Americans)
 - 18% aged 16-19 not in school and not working (versus 10% for all Americans)
- Health
 - Alcohol and drug abuse (twice national average)
 - 75% of Native American youth deaths are alcohol-related
 - Substance use at early age
 - Health issues
 - Mental illness
 - Post-traumatic stress (history of oppression and present circumstances mean that risk of trauma is comparatively high)

Challenges for All Indians and Native Americans (continued)

- Health (continued)
 - Health issues (continued)
 - Lower than average life expectancy
 - High suicide rate (2.5 times national average)
- Criminal
 - High rate of gang participation
 - Involvement in juvenile justice system 2.5 times the national rate
- Social
 - Single parent household
 - Overrepresentation in foster care
 - Unlikely to take advantage of transitional living services as they age out of foster care
- Personal
 - Above average poverty (twice national average)
 - Homelessness
 - Low self-esteem
 - Unclear self-image

In many respects, the Indian and Native American population faces fewer challenges off the reservation. They may still suffer from dislocation, alienation, and poverty in urban and suburban areas, but they have access to a better variety of services such as health care, housing, job training, life skills, and human and social services. Those who remain on the reservation face an additional set of specific challenges.

Challenges on the Reservation

- Employment
 - Limited employment possibilities
 - Homelessness for those who leave the reservation because of lack of education and employment skills
 - Lack of support services (child care and transportation)
- Acute housing shortage
- High unemployment rates in tribal villages (45-90%)
- Inadequate funding for tribal schools
- Conflict between cultural preservation and relocation to find work
- Lack of activities for youth

Networking

Only a small number of Native American youth are being served by WIA programs. Involvement with tribal communities and peers is vital when working with Indian and Native American youth; it is important to network with groups that already provide services to them. There are many groups and programs that provide a variety of social and cultural services and activities.

Hoop of Learning

The Hoop of Learning program offers a protected, culture-rich learning environment designed by and for Native Americans within the public high school system. The focus of the program is nurturing the students' indigenous worldview and spiritual understanding as the basis for development and as a protection from negative influences and self-destructive paths. (<http://www.hewlett.org/NR/rdonlyres/1DB041ED-2816-4184-A589-77BF515CE2B4/0/NativeAmericanYouthinTransition.pdf>)

Groups and Programs	Services and Activities
Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio 67 East Innis Avenue P.O. Box 07705 Columbus, OH 43207 614-443-6120 614-443-2651 (fax) http://naicco.tripod.com/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities • AA meetings • Education and employment services • Basic needs assistance • Cultural Arts • Talking circles • Food pantry • Veteran referrals
The American Indian Education Center 1314 Denison Road, Suite 102 Cleveland, OH 44109 216-351-4488 http://www.aiecc.net/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities • Health-related activities • Family strengthening programs • Tutoring services • Social and service-oriented youth council • Tutoring • Powwows • Housing programs • Social activities
Native American Center Fort Lewis College 1000 Rim Drive Durango CO 81302 970-247-7221 http://www.fortlewis.edu/student_life/native_american_center/default.asp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic counseling and services • Personal development activities • Cultural appreciation • Individual advising • Group workshops • Social activities
Native American Cultural Center PO Box 14408 San Francisco CA 94114 415-641-9466 Mike_allen_nacc@yahoo.com http://www.nativecc.com/Index.html	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities • Educational materials
Native American Community Services of Erie and Niagara Counties 1316 Main Street, Suite A Niagara Falls NY 14301 716-285-5658; Fax: 716-282-4868 http://www.nacswny.org/Customers/customindex/NAmerican.cfm?SID=5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Substance abuse prevention • Suicide prevention • Foster care • Home-based preservation services • Job search services • Work experience services
Alaska's People 3600 San Jeronimo Drive Anchorage AK 99508 907-793-3351; 877-985-5900 cwren@citci.com http://www.citci.com/page/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education referral • Training referral • Employment placement • Job search methods • Career counseling • Employment recruitment

Respecting Culture and Tradition

When working with Indian and Native American youth, it is important to avoid stereotypes while respecting their culture and traditions.

What Works

- Treatment based on tribal values, traditional activities, and spirituality
 - Connect youth with Indian or Native American adults as role models and mentors.
 - Use respectful language when referring to Indians and Native Americans.
- Peer support groups
- Interpersonal problems taken into account
- Educational approaches based on culture and learning styles of Native American youth
- Culturally appropriate assessment tools
- Awareness that peer support can be part of problem and part of cure
- Alcohol and drug abuse treatment
- Addressing economic needs
- Addressing issues facing all youth in today's world
- Involvement of community, tribal council, family, and school

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