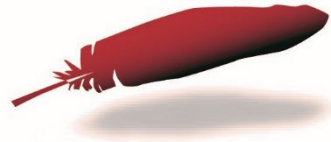


National Indian
Health Board



Policy and Program Considerations to Improve Birth
Outcomes for
American Indian and Alaska Native
Women and Their Babies

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Chief Executive Officer
National Indian Health Board
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National Indian Health Board

Mission Statement: Established by the Tribes to advocate as the united voice of federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, NIHB seeks to reinforce Tribal sovereignty, strengthen Tribal health systems, secure resources, and build capacity to achieve the highest level of health and well-being for our People.



Correct Terminology

- **American Indian and Alaska Native is a legal term and status. Please use this terms when discussing federal policy as it pertains to sovereign Tribal Nations and their citizens.**
- The US Federal Government's Trust and Treaty Obligations attach to the 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations
- Tribal Nations as sovereign governments are recognized in the Constitution of the United States
- "First Nations" is a legal term used in Canada.

In policy making "Indigenous" oversteps legal and political status of American Indians and Alaska Natives – federally recognized sovereign nations and their citizens – and is not the correct term when discussing federal policy.



Barriers and Recommendations

Each of the issues we bring before you are an examples of structural policy, practice and funding priorities contributing to the ongoing harm to American Indian and Alaska Native health and public health. Many are paternalistic and cultural barriers.

The good news: the requests and suggestions advanced here, if put into practice would set the path for long-term improvement in American Indian and Alaska native health.



CDC Life Expectancy Report

- Issued- August 31, 2022
- Life Expectancy in the U.S. Dropped for the Second Year in a Row in 2021
- Largest two-year drop since 1922-23
- -.9 year drop for all Americans in the aggregate

**American Indians' life expectancy
dropped 6.6 years in 2021!
1944 levels for ALL Americans**



Structural Racism

This report is a bellwether for the years of structural racism that has saturated American policy making and appropriations practices and left American Indians and Alaska Natives with the worst health status, systems and outcomes in the nation.



Maternal Mortality Rate Statistics

- Pregnancy-related mortality ratio for AI/AN women is 29.7 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, 12.7 for non-Hispanic white women
- AI/AN women 2-3x more likely to die of pregnancy/birth complications than white non-Hispanic women



Historical Trauma

“Massive cumulative trauma across generations rather than the more limited diagnosis of PTSD, which is inadequate in capturing the influence and attributes of Native trauma.”- Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003



Historical Oppression & Ongoing Marginalization

Genocide

Forced Migration

Cultural Erasure/War/Boarding Schools/Policy

Forced Sterilization

Lack of comprehensive healthcare

Lack of cultural awareness

Severe underfunding of healthcare

Legacy of colonial policies



Maternal Health Work at NIHB

- Initiated an annual National American Indian and Alaska Native Maternal Mortality Prevention Institute
- In partnership with the CDC to lead a Tribal-led Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC)
- HearHer Campaign



Recommendations: Tribal Consultation

“To this end, Executive Order 13175 of November 6, 2000 (Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments), charges all executive departments and agencies with engaging in regular, meaningful, and robust consultation with Tribal officials in the development of Federal policies that have Tribal implications.”

- President Biden
January 26, 2021

We encourage SACIMM to work through HHS to engage with Tribes on any policy recommendations it seeks to advance.



Recommendations: Medicaid Expansion



- Support legislation to eliminate the coverage gap for American Indian and Alaska Native women who reside in states that have refused to expand Medicaid or to extend postpartum coverage.
- NIHB is prepared to work with and support the efforts of the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee on developing best practices to expand Medicaid eligibility to include more American Indian and Alaska Native mothers.



Recommendations: Doulas/Midwives

- HRSA must advocate for a higher budget figure to increase the workforce of midwives & doulas
- We hope the Committee will include recommending that HRSA must prioritize programs that are working to increase AI/AN representation in the maternal healthcare
- Fight for a federal budget request that will Increase the amount of funding towards scholarships for nurse midwives , esp. culturally competent nurse midwife training program at a Tribal college/university.



Recommendations: Support Tribal Data Sovereignty and Research Capacity



- The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (2010) provides that Tribal Epicenters must be treated as public health authorities for purposes of HIPAA.
- Tribal Nations and Epicenters experience uneven data access throughout federal government.
- GAO Report affirmed access issues- 5 recommendations
- HR 3841/S.1397



RECOMMENDATIONS: S. 2907/ H.R. 5444

Support Passage of Boarding School Justice Legislation

THE TIME FOR HEALING IS NOW.

**Support the Truth & Healing Commission
on U.S. Indian Boarding Schools.**



Recommendation: Support Increased Funding

- Indian Health Service
- Building Housing for Doctors and health care providers
- PreNatal Care Capacity Investments
- Traditional/Culturally/Linguistically appropriate care
- Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program
- Food and Nutrition Investment/Peri and post-natal



Recommendation: Support & Fund Tribal-Led Maternal Mortality Review Committee (MMRC)

- Include the development of Tribal-led MMRC's as an explicit recommendation.
- NIHB is happy to work with the Committee on these efforts and requests adequate funding to enhance our current creation and launch efforts.



Recommendation: Support & Fund Educational Awareness Campaigns

- Support and funding educational awareness campaigns that empower AI/AN women to speak up and connect with their support systems.
- This initiative will work to address the history and ongoing experiences of intergenerational trauma and integrate perspectives that encompass physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.



Miigwech (Thank you)

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