



# Effective Health Care Behavioral Health Services for American Indians/Alaska Natives Nomination Summary Document

## Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- The topic, *Behavioral Health Services for American Indians/Alaska Native*, is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time. This topic could potentially be considered for new research in comparative effectiveness.

## Topic Description

**Nominator(s):** Individual

**Nomination Summary:** The nominator asserts that significant health disparities exist among the Native American population in Arizona as a result of numerous factors, including poverty, barriers to care, and insufficient infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, transportation). There is a dearth of research documenting current services and effective practices for behavioral health (mental illness and substance abuse) treatment and domestic violence interventions within this population. A systematic review would provide information to agencies who deliver these services and resources to Native American populations.

### **Staff-Generated PICO**

**Population(s):** American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population in the US.

**Intervention(s):** Mental health interventions, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and domestic violence interventions all tailored to the AI/AN population.

**Comparator(s):** Standard behavioral health and domestic violence interventions, no treatment populations.

**Outcome(s):** Morbidity, mortality, quality of life (QoL), mental health symptoms, remission of mental illness/disorders, sobriety/abstinence, substance abuse treatment retention, rates of domestic violence

**Key Questions from Nominator:**

- How are the mental health issues of Native Americans in Arizona being treated?
- What interventions are effective for substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness?

Based on a discussion with our clinical reviewer and after contacting the nominator, we expanded the topic to the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population in any part of the US. We also confirmed that smoking cessation could be excluded from consideration, given that interventions for smoking cessation are well-established. Our revised key questions are as follows:

- What mental health interventions or treatments are effective in AI/AN populations in the US?
- What substance abuse interventions or treatments are effective AI/AN populations in the US?
- What domestic violence interventions or prevention strategies are effective in AI/AN populations in the US?

## Considerations

- More than 4 million Americans identify themselves as having Native American heritage. There are 564 federally recognized tribes. In current research, individuals who identify as having Native American heritage are categorized as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN).
- The reported prevalence of most mental disorders among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations is similar to that of the overall US population. However, recent research suggests that American Indians/Alaska Natives may experience far greater psychological distress than the general population and are at greater risk for specific mental disorders such as depression, substance abuse, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Death certificate data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics show that death rates from suicide were approximately 50% higher among AI/AN persons than whites. The suicide rate among AI/AN adolescents and young adults ages 15 to 34 is about 2.5 times higher than the national average for that age group.
- AI/AN women experience the highest rates of lifetime victimization related to domestic violence. A 2004 US Department of Justice report estimated these assault rates to be as much as 50% higher than the next most victimized demographic group.
- Research indicates that AI/AN health disparities are inherently tied to the historical and sociopolitical experiences of Native Americans. These experiences and beliefs can negatively affect access to care, therefore effective interventions intended for AI/AN populations should be designed with these issues in mind.
- A scan of the literature identified few studies that addressed mental health, substance abuse, or domestic violence interventions for the for AI/AN populations. Therefore, this topic is not feasible for a full systematic review due to the limited data available for a review at this time.