

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Title of Event: Serving Native Americans with the Barriers to Self-Sufficiency of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse

Date: August 16-18, 2000

Location: Dallas, Texas

Introduction

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, funded by the Administration for Children and Families, supported a 2-day conference held by Office of Family Assistance, Region VI, examining the issues of domestic violence and substance abuse as barriers to self-sufficiency for the Native American Population. The focus of the conference was to help TANF case workers better understand the impact of domestic violence and substance abuse in Native American populations, and identify barriers unique to Native American Communities. The conference also focused on developing strategies for collaboration with Native American organizations and governments. See Appendix A for the complete Agenda.

TANF workers from Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas were invited to attend. For the complete list of presenters, see Appendix B.

Welcome

Carol Beth Sedanko, Children and Families Program Specialist, Administration for Children and Families, Dallas, introduced Christine Hernandez, Regional Director, US DHHS, Region VI, Dallas, and Leon R. McCowan, Regional Hub Director, Region VI, Dallas, Region VIII, Denver. Both Ms. Hernandez and Mr. McCowan welcomed everyone to the conference and remarked on the need to better understand and serve the Native American population, especially around issues of substance abuse and domestic violence.

The Tribes of Oklahoma, New Mexico and the Denver Region Overview of History and Culture

Oklahoma Tribes

Norma Newton, Programs Officer, Oklahoma Department of Human Services presented background information regarding the 37 federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma and presented a video entitled, *Land of the Red People*, which explored some misconceptions about Native people and Native culture. She also outlined specific barriers to work and self-sufficiency that many Native Americans face.

In general, a Native American person is concerned with her family, her community, and her environment before herself as an individual. Her relationship to her surroundings is not merely a physical one—she incorporates a circular, spiritual sense of “oneness” into virtually every aspect of her daily life. Spirituality is not a practice that takes place on designated days and at certain times, rather it is an integral part of life, a circular relationship between the individual, the creator, and all things created. Ms. Newton noted that these priorities of family, community, and environment could cause barriers to work for a Native American in a number of subtle ways. For instance, many Native People consider what popular culture calls “extended family” to be immediate family members. Therefore, the illness or death of an aunt or cousin may have the same impact as the illness or death of a mother or sibling. Another example relates to some spiritual ceremonies, which can last for as many as five days. If newly hired, taking five days off can be a huge burden, especially if the supervisor is unfamiliar with this Native American spirituality.

Most Native people, and their lifestyles, can be separated into three broad categories: traditional, urban traditional, and urban. The traditional Indian most likely lives on a reservation, deals mostly with other Native Americans in her daily life, and lives a life closely resembling her ancient culture. This traditional Native person’s actions may be based on the “here and now” instead of years down the line. For these reasons, Ms. Newton suggests that traditional Native people might have a hard time understanding and embracing the idea of setting long-term goals, such as retirement accounts. The urban-traditional person’s life is a dual one: she at once identifies with the ways of life on the reservation, the Native spirituality, while at the same time living and/or working in the dominant society, accepting and adopting some of its culture as well. This person might have a hard time reconciling the two ways of life while facing the challenges of living in both worlds. The non-traditional Native person is quite assimilated into the dominant white world, but might still identify as American Indian or Native. Ms. Newton noted that non-traditional Indians at times have difficulty asking for help, as that is not a part of their heritages.

Native Americans have, as a group, endured theft, bigotry, and oppression. Some theorists believe that the collective memory of Native Americans is overflowing with pain and suffering, according to Ms. Newton. Many feel that this memory is one of the root causes of the high rates of substance abuse among Native People.

New Mexico Tribes

Peggy Bird of Mending the Sacred Hoop S.T.O.P. Violence Against Indian Women Technical Assistance Project was scheduled to discuss the history and culture of Native American tribes in New Mexico. Instead, she took the time to reflect on Ms. Newton’s comments and to speak to Indian culture as a whole, rather than in a particular region.

Ms. Bird echoed Ms. Newton’s comments concerning the need to respect the Native American individual in her way of life and her decisions. She also discussed the unnatural move from a peaceful matriarchal society to a more violent patriarchal society

that began to take place when the Native American People were uprooted. Ms. Bird wanted to clarify Ms. Newton's discussion of priorities for Native Americans: she feels that putting the tribe and family in a role more important than the individual is too hierarchical and unnatural, taking away from the more circular and traditional spirituality and way of life that tends not to put certain aspects of self or community in front of others. Ms. Bird also mentioned that her experience has not led her to see the roles of traditional, urban-traditional, and non-traditional as so discrete and definitive.

Tribal Courts and Tribal Sovereignty

Wayne Weston of Cangleska, Inc., discussed the differences between U.S. State Courts and most Tribal Courts. He noted that Tribal Courts are informal and casual when compared to State Courts, it is much easier to walk in and speak with a judge personally without waiting. Also, Tribal Courts tend to place a lot of emphasis on the wisdom of elders, family, society, and spiritual leaders, rather than written law and appointed judges. In cases involving alcohol and substance abuse, Mr. Weston mentioned there is a trend in Tribal Courts to focus on treatment and rehabilitation as opposed to incarceration or punitive actions

Mr. Weston did not discuss in detail the workings of the Tribal Court system or Tribal Sovereignty, but he did note that each Tribe is a separate, sovereign state and should be recognized as such on all levels. He did speak briefly on the concept of personal sovereignty, and recognized the importance of encouraging self-worth, expression, and "free-thinking" among Native People. He also stressed that TANF agencies should recognize themselves as allies to the Native American people and agencies, not as leaders.

Substance Abuse

Jose Rivera, Juris Doctorate, consultant on treatment of Native Americans/substance abuse, U.S. DHHS, SAMSHA, presented on the concepts of addiction and recovery. He referred to addiction as a progressive, chronic brain disease involving relapse that is both treatable and reversible and which also causes one to ignore adverse circumstances that occur as a result of using. Though many assume addicts to be unable to live "normally," and hold a job, it is estimated that seventy percent of all addicts in the United States are current members of the workforce. The Native American addict faces many issues and problems: 50 percent of Indian female addicts report a history of sexual abuse and/or domestic violence. Native American male addicts report issues of depression, poly-drug use, lack of housing, and lack of opportunities.

Short-term treatment (less than 90 days of inpatient care) has proved to be extremely ineffective for the Native American population. Successful treatment programs and plans embrace Native American culture as an aid to the healing process of overcoming substance addiction. Successful programs also include substance abuse prevention, and extensive follow-up care after "graduation" from a treatment program. Essentially, the new and effective plans for the recovery process no longer accept

sobriety as the final desired outcome. Rather, it works toward goals of economic self-sufficiency, employment, adequate housing, education, etc. as part of the treatment process, in addition to sobriety. From planning to implementation, it has been shown that Native American spirituality, culture, and structure are crucial to a Native person's ultimate success.

Often, the issue of substance abuse is focused on the degenerative behavior, or the outcome of sobriety, ignoring the process of recovery. It is important to remember that people in recovery need to be honored for the overwhelming task they are undertaking. The process of recovery is one of self-reflection, learning, and growing. For this reason, recovering addicts will be yearning for challenging positions in their work. Often, after tackling such challenges involved in getting sober, unfulfilling employment involving mundane tasks is not a desirable match. It is important to note that many employers recognize the drive and intelligence of people in recovery, and are willing and even eager to hire recovering addicts.

TANF programs need to be the leader in establishing collaborative relationships between substance abuse programs, tribal governments, employers, and welfare programs. When planning to collaborate, it is important to recognize the sovereignty of each Tribal Nation. Mr. Rivera suggests doing as much research as possible before setting up a meeting with any particular Tribe. Find out how to address the health and social services committee or its equivalent. Do not be afraid to ask about customs of the Tribe and correct ways of addressing elders and leaders. It is absolute imperative to be respectful and to allow time for the collaborative process. Also, when collaborating, be imaginative about who is involved. Do not forget about youth programs, women's organizations, etc..

Domestic Violence

Brenda Hill of the Sacred Circle discussed domestic violence issues for Native American women. She began by refuting the myth that alcohol and other drugs cause violence. While she agrees that substances may increase the frequency or severity of some violence, it is important to remember that men who are violent choose to behave that way. Domestic violence in the Native American community stems from an unnatural pyramid of power and oppression that is topped by male privilege. Please see Appendix C, *Unnatural Power & Control*, for an outline of many different manifestations of intimidation and control in relationships.

One out of every three women in the United States is battered, and the violence against women is not decreasing. Currently, not enough is done to advocate for victims of family or domestic violence. Women who kill their batterers serve jail sentences an average of two to three times longer than men who kill their partners, and the majority of women killed by their partners have left, or are in the process of leaving, the violent relationship. In light of these statistics of violence and danger, it is important to help women make informed decisions about domestic violence, the process of leaving if she chooses to leave, and the resources available. Most importantly, believe the victim and

respect her and her decisions. Instead of trying to force someone to leave an abusive relationship, find out what she needs (support, food, etc.) and find a way to get it for her.

Pat Cole, Associate Director of the National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence in Austin, Texas discussed the process of screening clients for domestic violence and also discussed the relationship between TANF and family violence. See Appendix D, *TANF and Family Violence: What is the Relationship?* for more information.

How does a TANF worker screen for domestic violence, and try to help her client, without being too invasive and disrespectful of privacy? The screening process for domestic violence needs to be thoughtful and relevant. Most victims of domestic violence do not report abuse when asked in a welfare or TANF office because they feel that it is nobody's business, are embarrassed, or are worried about a lack of confidentiality. Here are a few suggestions to keep in mind when developing a domestic violence screening tool:

- Phrase questions in a TANF context (e.g., work requirements or time restrictions can be waived for these reasons, etc.).
- Make it clear that her safety is your primary concern.
- Make it clear that all women are asked these questions she was not singled out.
- Refrain from using jargon and over-used terms such as: domestic violence, barrier, power, good cause exemption, family violence.
- Provide many opportunities throughout the TANF application process for her to discuss violence, continually make information regarding these issues available.
- Understand that family violence issues may not come up until it truly becomes a barrier (i.e., she may not mention it until she is late for work three times, etc.).
- Provide a safe and CONFIDENTIAL atmosphere. Do not discuss specific cases and clients with co-workers.
- Find a way to ensure privacy in the office (e.g., use a conference room, another office, etc. if others can overhear).
- Respect a woman's decision to stay in an abusive relationship, and let her know that she can still get support.

- Find ways of providing information that will not endanger her when she returns home.
- Go to her (at home, on the reservation, at a neutral spot) where she is comfortable.
- Make sure staff is comfortable discussing violence issues before they speak with clients about them.
- Respect her.

Mending the Sacred Hoop S.T.O.P. Violence Against Indian Women Technical

Assistance Project

Peggy Bird, Juris Doctorate, described the Technical Assistance Project at Mending the Sacred Hoop S.T.O.P Violence Against Indian Women. The project helps organizations develop domestic violence service plans, provides on-site consultations, assists with program and curriculum development, aids in creating tribal codes dealing with family violence, and holds various conferences and workshops around cultural awareness and domestic violence. The Project can be found at <http://www.msh-ta.org>.

Program Crossovers and Implication for Staff Training

Native American Child Care

Patti Boulanger, Administration for Children and Families, Region VI, discussed the Childcare and Development Funds (CCDF). Currently, there are 53 tribal CCDF grantees: 3 in Louisiana, 14 in New Mexico, 34 in Oklahoma, and 2 in Texas. The purpose of the grants is to increase the affordability, accessibility, and quality of childcare. Eligibility for State-administered childcare programs is not affected by eligibility for, or use of, Tribal CCDF programs. State and Tribes are responsible for preventing duplicate services.

Native American Head Start

Patti Howell, Indian Head Start Quality Improvement Center, Norman, Oklahoma discussed the Indian Head Start programs in 26 states, 80 percent of which are center-based programs. Though the programs are designed locally, they are required to uphold Federal performance standards. Ms. Howell suggested that Head Start facilities are excellent places for collaboration with childcare services, TANF, and health and wellness programs.

Medicaid

Gary Martin, Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), Region VI, discussed the relationships, and lack of relationships, between Medicaid and TANF. There are 62 different ways to access Medicaid, and no two Medicaid programs are alike. It is important to remember that TANF and Medicaid are not officially linked in anyway. Often, families who go off TANF do not realize that they may be eligible for Medicaid. There are also Children Health Insurance Programs (CHIPs), of which many Native American families are not aware, for uninsured children. Those who qualify may choose between Medicaid and the Indian Health Service (<http://www.ihs.gov>). Currently, discussions are being held around allowing Tribes to establish individual Medicaid programs, separate from State programs.

Tribal NEW and Tribal TANF

Jim Chandler, Administration for Children and Families, Region VI, discussed the history of Tribal NEW and TANF programs. Since August of 1996, Native American Tribes have been able to design and implement TANF programs separate from State programs, though the reporting requirements are essentially the same for both entities. The funding for these Tribal TANF programs comes out of Federal Block Grants made to States, though each State has the option of adding more money from State funds. There are differences between State and Tribal TANF program requirements:

- Due to the newness of the Tribal TANF programs and lack of resources in many Tribal areas, Tribal work participation rates differ from the States' as Tribal Programs are not required to have 50 percent of one-parent families and 90 percent of two-parent families engaged in work or employment activity.
- Time limits for Tribal TANF programs are not as specific as for State programs, and can be negotiated.
- While States are not allowed to use more than 15 percent of funding for administrative costs, Tribes are allowed to use up to 35 percent in the first year of a program, 30 percent in the second year, and 25 percent of funding in subsequent years for administrative costs.
- Due to geographic remoteness, culture, and tradition, Tribal TANF programs are allowed to broaden the definition of "work activity," unlike States, to include activities such as, basket weaving on reservations and hunting and fishing in Alaska.

There are 556 federally recognized Native American Tribes (including Alaskan Villages) in the United States. Currently, 155 of these Tribes and Villages are being served through 28 Tribal TANF programs. That number is expected to increase in October of 2000. More and more Tribal Nations are expressing interest in developing individual TANF programs. To obtain Federal funds, Tribes must submit a TANF plan to the

appropriate ACF Regional Office, and to the Division of Tribal Services. A Tribal TANF Guidance Document can be obtained from any ACF Regional Office, or from the DTS homepage, at: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/dts>.

Child Support Enforcement

Carl Rich, Administration of Children and Families, Region VI, spoke briefly about Tribal issues around child support enforcement. The Office of CSE is available for Tribal families, and there are new regulations that allow enforcement to go through Tribal law and Tribal courts, as opposed to the State's system.

Developing and Maintaining Effective Networks with Native American Service Providers

Panel

Moderated by: Jose Rivera, Consultant, DHHS, SAMSHA

Members: Brenda Hill, Sacred Circle; Peggy Bird, Mending the Sacred Hoop; Rosemary Shaw, Director of Counseling Services, Osage Nation; Wayne Weston, Cangleska, Inc.

The panel was asked to provide guidance and advice for those interested in beginning the process of collaboration between TANF and Native American organizations.

All of the comments from panel members fall into four basic aspects of collaboration: creativity, patience, preparation and planning, respect.

Creativity

When collaborating with Native American organizations, unique welfare and social issues combined with a distinct lack of precedent in collaboration demand a high amount of creativity in each stage of relationship development. Initially, be creative when deciding who should be involved in collaboration. Mr. Rivera reiterated the need to include input from the Health and Human Services Committee, Law Enforcement, and Tribal Courts. Also solicit advice from domestic violence programs, substance abuse programs, women's organizations, etc. Ms. Hill noted that domestic violence advocates are an excellent resource for information, designing programs, and providing training to TANF staff regarding domestic violence and the Native American Communities.

Patience

Mr. Rivera emphasized patience as a crucial aspect of building collaborations with the Native American Community. He encourages TANF workers and collaboration organizers to invest time without expecting immediate results. In the Native Community, introduction is extremely important. It is also important to allow time for broad

introductions of many Tribal members. Often, the “official” Tribal leaders will not be the first contact with the Tribe, at times it may be the “Elders” or other traditional members of the Community who can provide the information needed to build a strong collaboration. It is important to be willing to take the time to sit and talk with the members of the Tribe presented. Successful collaboration requires flexibility and understanding as well. There is a long history of maltreatment and harsh communication between the United States and Native American Tribes, and many Tribes are distrustful. It is important to understand that some Tribes may not be ready to collaborate, but may be willing to listen to suggestions and consider them for the future.

Preparation and Planning

All of the panel members agreed enthusiastically that it is important to research the particular Tribes and Tribal cultures involved in the proposed collaboration. It is ideal to find out about the customs and traditions a visitor is expected to follow when visiting the Tribe or Reservation. All of the panel members agreed that it is not rude to ask about such customs, as long as it is done in a respectful way. Before meeting with Tribal leaders, know the names of the Tribal members who will attend the meeting, the programs the Tribe already has in place, any problems the Tribe might be having, and the specific aspects of that individual Tribe’s way of governing. Different Tribes have different jurisdictional issues, public laws, Tribal court systems, and protocols. Before an official meeting, one can usually contact the Tribal Housing Authority, Chief of Police, Head of the Social Services Committee, etc. to find out the extent of the Tribe’s problems and programs concerning substance abuse and domestic violence.

Respect

By far, the most important aspect of successful collaboration with the Native American Community is sincere respect. It is crucial to be aware of the “Head of State” status that the Chief or Governor of the Tribe has. Remember that Native American women, people, and Tribes are the experts on their own lives. Mr. Rivera suggested walking into a collaboration with sincere sentiments, stating implicitly and explicitly that the goal is “to listen, understand, and learn to help.”

Conclusion

The Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, Region VI Conference, *Serving Native Americans with the Barriers to Self-sufficiency of Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse*, proved to be a success. While it is unfortunate that some speakers did not present on their expected topics, the expression of misunderstandings and charged emotions of the participants magnified the need for more understanding between TANF workers and the Native American communities. All of the presenters provided excellent insight and information, participants walked away eager to investigate opportunities for collaboration.

The conference provided a strong, basic understanding of Native American culture, substance abuse issues in the Native Community, domestic violence issues in the Native Community, and concrete advice for beginning the collaboration process. The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network will continue to explore collaboration opportunities between agencies and communities, to examine TANF issues and policies in the Native American and Tribal Communities, and to address the need to recognize substance abuse and domestic violence as significant barriers to self-sufficiency.

APPENDIX A

AGENDA

SERVING NATIVE AMERICANS WITH THE BARRIERS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Presented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
1301 Young Street
Conference Room 924
Dallas, Texas 75202

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16

12:30 Welcome

Christine Hernandez, Regional Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Region VI, Dallas

Leon R. McCowan, Regional Hub Director, Southwest Regional Hub Dallas, Region VI; Denver, Region VIII

12:40-2:45 The Tribes of Oklahoma, New Mexico and the Denver Region
Overview of History and Cultures

Oklahoma Tribes – Norma Newton, Programs Officer, Oklahoma Department of Human Services; New Mexico and Denver Region Tribes – Peggy Bird, Mending the Sacred Hoop S.T.O.P. Violence Against Indian Women Technical Assistance Project

2:45-3:00 Break

3:00-5:00 Tribal Courts and Tribal Sovereignty
Wayne Weston, Cangleska, Inc.

5:00 Adjourn

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17

8:30-9:00 Tribal Courts and Tribal Sovereignty (cont'd)

- 9:00-10:30 Substance Abuse
History and Cultural Implications for Service Delivery
- Jose Rivera, J.D., Consultant on Treatment of Native Americans/Substance Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)
- 10:30-10:45 Break
- 10:45-11:30 Substance Abuse (cont'd)
- 11:30-12:15 Domestic Violence
Brenda Hill, Sacred Circle*
- 12:15-1:30 Lunch
- 1:30-3:00 Domestic Violence (cont'd)
Brenda Hill and Pat Cole, Assistance Director, National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Resource persons: Marcia Smith, Executive Director, Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Rosemary Shaw, Director of Counseling Services, Osage Nation, Oklahoma.
- 3:00-3:15 Break
- 3:15-5:00 U.S. Department of Justice – STOP Violence Against Indian Women Grants
- Peggy Bird, Mending the Sacred Hoop S.T.O.P. Violence Against Indian Women TA Project
- 5:00 Adjourn

FRIDAY, AUGUST 18

- 9:00-10:30 Program Crossovers and Implication for Staff Training
- Native American Child Welfare – Judy Baggett, Administration for Children and Families, Region VI; Child Support Enforcement – Carl Rich, Administration for Children and Families, Region VI; Medicaid – Gary Martin, Health Care Financing Administration, Region VI; Native American Child Care – Patti Boulanger, Administration for Children and Families, Region VI; Native American Head Start – Patty Howell, Indian Head Start Quality Improvement Center, Norman, Oklahoma; Tribal NEW and Tribal TANF – Jim Chandler, Administration for Children and Families, Region VI.

10:30-10:45

Break

10:45-12:00

Developing and Maintaining Effective Networks with Native American Service Providers – Rosemary Shaw, Director of Counseling Services, Osage Nation, Oklahoma; Brenda Hill, Sacred Circle; Wayne Weston, Cangleska; Peggy Bird, Mending the Sacred Hoop. Resource Persons: Pat Cole, National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence; Marcia Smith, Executive Director, Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

12:00 Adjourn

*Sacred Circle – Cangleska, Inc., is a private non-profit organization that provides domestic violence and sexual assault prevention/intervention services for the Oglala Lakota Nation. Cangleska, Inc. was awarded a four-year Family Violence and Prevention Services grant from the Office of Community Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, in October of 1997. This award establishes The Sacred Circle, National Resource to End Violence Against Native Women, located in Rapid City, South Dakota. The primary audience of Sacred Circle includes over five hundred federally recognized American Indian/Alaska Native tribes across the United States. Direct service agencies and personnel in tribal communities are offered assistance with specialized training institutes, on-site technical assistance, culturally specific materials, and assessment of tribal agencies' infrastructure to facilitate a coordinated community response regarding domestic violence in tribal communities.

APPENDIX B

Presenter Contact information—serving Native Americans with the barriers to self-sufficiency of domestic violence and substance abuse

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APPENDIX C

UNNATURAL POWER & CONTROL

MALE PRIVILEGE
Treats her like a servant. Makes all the big decisions. Acts like the "king of the castle." Defines men's and women's roles.

ISOLATION
Controls what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads. Limits her outside involvement. Uses jealousy to justify actions.

INTIMIDATION
Makes her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures. Smashes things. Destroys her property. Abuses pets. Displays weapons.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Puts her down. Makes her feel bad about herself. Calls her names. Makes her think she's crazy. Plays mind games. Humiliates her. Makes her feel guilty.

MINIMIZE, LIE AND BLAME
Makes light of the abuse and doesn't take her concerns seriously. Says the abuse didn't happen. Shifts responsibility for abusive behavior. Says she caused it.

USING CHILDREN
Makes her feel guilty about the children. Uses the children to relay messages. Uses visitation to harass her. Threatens to take away the children.

ECONOMIC ABUSE
Prevents her from working. Makes her ask for money. Gives her an allowance. Takes her money. Doesn't let her know about or access family income.

COERCION AND THREATS
Makes and/or carries out threats to do something to hurt her. Threatens to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare. Makes her drop charges. Makes her do illegal things.

CULTURAL ABUSE
Competes over "Indianness." Misinterprets culture to prove male superiority/female submission. Uses relatives to beat her up. Buys into "blood quantum" competitions.

RITUAL ABUSE
Prays against her. Defines spirituality as masculine. Stops her from practicing her ways. Uses religion as a threat. "God doesn't allow divorce." Says her period makes her "dirty."

UNNATURAL POWER & CONTROL

Produced by Sacred Circle - Natural Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women

Revised 5/08

APPENDIX D

TANF AND FAMILY VIOLENCE: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP?

- 20 to 30% of women receiving TANF are in violent partnerships. As many as 65% have experienced partner violence at some time.
- For some women, partner violence increases as they try to go to work because abusers believe they might lose control over women if they move toward independence.
- Women in violent partnerships often also have mental health problems (depression and post traumatic stress syndrome), substance abuse problems, and physical health problems – all of which can pose barriers to successful employment.
- Women in violent relationship are more likely to cycle on and off welfare roles and to spend greater total time on welfare.
- Women in violent relationships are more likely to have periods of unemployment, job turnovers, and lower personal incomes.
- Women in violent partnerships are less likely to maintain employment over time.

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IMPLEMENTING THE FAMILY VIOLENCE OPTION

- Explain why partner violence is being raised as an issue at the TANF or workforce programs
- Use language women are familiar with, not professional or bureaucratic jargon (remember that terms like “good cause,” “family violence,” “domestic violence,” and “barrier” may not be familiar or meaningful to women)
- Give clear explanations of what options are available if family violence is a barrier or safety risk
- Give the information at several different points in the TANF process and explain that the women can reveal partner violence at any time
- Assure women that information they reveal will be confidential (then be sure you keep it confidential)
- Assure women that telling about partner abuse will not jeopardize their benefits or opportunities under TANF
- Reassure women about concerns for their safety
- Provide a private place for women to reveal or talk about family violence

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ASSISTING WOMEN WITH FAMILY VIOLENCE ISSUES

- Respect women's decisions about whether they want good cause exemptions (waivers)
- Respect women's decisions about whether they want family violence services
- Provide services at sites that are accessible and safe for the women; many women will not go to services outside their community
- Have trained personnel available to talk (provide services) to women
- Have personnel that understand and respect women's culture and the realities of their living situations
- Recognize that family violence may be one of several significant problems the women is coping with. Set realistic priorities, coordinate services, and respond to her identified concerns
- Be realistic in expectations of service outcomes: family violence issues, like many other problems, are not resolved quickly or easily
- Tell women about family violence services available in the community, including hotline services, whether or not they want help in dealing with family violence at this time

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STAFF TRAINING: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT

All staff need basic training

- Basic information about options available for TANF clients in violent partnerships
- What is family violence? How does it manifest itself? Whose fault is it?
- Why must TANF and welfare-to-work programs consider family violence?
- How do you talk to women about family violence?
- Why are privacy and confidentiality so important?
- When should staff mention family violence options to women?
- What does a staff person do if they find out a woman is in a violent relationship?
- Exactly what procedures are followed to grant a good cause exemption?
- If women don't want an exemption, what else can they be offered?

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