

Steps Forward for HHS

Advancing AI/AN Health Equity

Based on the outcomes of the 2022 Inter-Tribal World Café on Health Equity, the following recommendations are examples of steps the US Department of Health & Humans Services (HHS) can take - in partnership and consultation with Tribes - to advance health equity for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN).

1. Tribal Sovereignty

- Create a policy acknowledging that 'American Indian and Alaska Native' is a matter of political status (not race/ethnicity)
- Ensure AI/AN are visible in health equity plans and definitions
- Approach AI/AN health equity through the Government-to-Government relationship the US maintains with Tribal Nations
- Focus on the strengths, assets, and knowledge of Tribes and Tribal organizations as the source of the answers to health equity

Resilience through Culture

- Support Indigenous knowledge, traditional healing, and culturally relevant services
- Invest in research and programs designed by Tribes for Tribes, including broader acceptance of practice-based evidence
- Proactively solicit Tribal input on communications materials going to Indian Country

3. Strong Tribal Institutions

- Build capacity of Tribal health and wellness organizations, programs, and workforce to recognize strengths and reduce inequities
- Collaborate and improve data sharing with Tribal governments and organizations, including Tribal Epidemiology Centers

Tribal Empowerment in State & Federal Governance

- Expand roles and involvement of Tribal affairs offices and advisors in policy creation and decision-making
- Work with Tribes to assess causes of disparities within HHS programs, and address inequities in policies and operations to close gaps
- Ensure regular, meaningful, and robust Tribal Consultations
- Be responsive to recommendations of Tribal Advisory Committees and ensure TACs are fully resourced

5.

Federal Trust Responsibility

- Expand Tribal set-asides for funding AI/AN health initiatives
- Expand the collection, reporting, and analysis of standardized data to better represent AI/AN
- Provide training to HHS employees on Tribes and application of the federal trust responsibility
- Foster a standard of cultural humility across agencies, programs, and staff