

# Special Diabetes Program for Indians

*Saving lives in Alabama and providing a strong return on federal investment.*



## History

Congress established the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) in 1997 to address the growing epidemic of diabetes in American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. This program has grown and become the nation's most strategic and effective federal initiative to combat diabetes. SDPI is currently authorized through fiscal year 2017.

## SDPI Outcomes

SDPI funding supports over 300 diabetes treatment and prevention programs in 35 states, and the results have been extraordinary. The structure of the grant program has allowed Tribes to collect data and document that this investment is both saving lives and saving the federal healthcare system money. For example, according to the United States Renal Data System, there has been a remarkable decline in diabetes incidence rates among AI/ANs since 1998 that has resulted in **a 29% decline, more than any other race**, in prevalence rates of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) – a costly complication often linked with diabetes. ESRD requires expensive treatments and is the single largest driver of Medicare costs. The Medicare cost per year for hemodialysis (a common ESRD treatment) exceeded \$84,000 per patient in 2013.

## Diabetes in Alabama

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2013, approximately 514,307 people in Alabama – **12.7% of the population** – had diagnosed diabetes, and many suffered from serious diabetes related conditions such as heart disease, neuropathy, and eye, foot and skin complications. In addition to the human toll diabetes places on the people of Alabama, it also places a large financial burden on the state's healthcare system. In 2012, the staggering estimate of direct and indirect cost of diabetes in Alabama was approximately \$4.31 billion.

**FY 2015 SDPI funding in Alabama totaled \$201,191. This funded a Community Directed Grant program for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.**

## Renewal is Vital

SDPI provides a strong return on federal investment and is saving lives in Alabama. Since the beginning of SDPI, blood sugar levels in AI/ANs have decreased, the risk of cardiovascular disease has been reduced, diabetes-related kidney disease progression has slowed, and primary prevention and weight management programs for Native children and youth have increased. **Congress must renew this critical program** to ensure that the SDPI funded programs can continue their important work and that lessons learned from these programs can be shared and replicated to keep Indian Country on the path to a diabetes-free future.



*"The diabetes program/team at PBCI has helped me see the importance of a serious diabetes self-management plan. The PBCI team is always*

*ready, willing, and very capable of explaining any question that I have in reaching my goals as I attempt to manage my diabetes."*

**-Angela Devilbiss,  
Poarch Creek Indian Diabetes Program**

National Indian  
Health Board

