



COMMUNITY WELLNESS REPORT 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STRENGTHS & NEEDS
OF THE URBAN AMERICAN INDIAN & ALASKA
NATIVE COMMUNITIES OF SANTA BARBARA &
VENTURA COUNTIES**



American Indian Health & Services
Improving the Health of Our Communities

Executive Summary

This Community Wellness Report examines the health and wellness of the American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) communities of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. The purpose of this report is to identify and prioritize the AIAN mental, emotional, cultural, spiritual and social service needs, as well as strengths that impact the overall wellness of the community. The comprehensive findings and priorities identified in this report create the foundation for the proposed AIAN youth and families system of care.

American Indian Health & Services (AIH&S) serves a diverse population in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. A patient population of over 500 AIAN patients are served annually with representation from 80 Native nations, tribes, and/or bands.

The AIH&S and California Consortium for Indian Health (CCUIH) acted as the project stewards by coordinating research, assessment, evaluation and meetings with the community. The primary data collection and analysis communicated in this report was conducted with leadership and in partnership with AIAN communities in the service area.

Report Methodology

Primary and secondary data collection were utilized to assess individual and community well-being. To guide this assessment, a process of multi-year data collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative variables were developed.

The AIH&S staff and evaluation team collaborated with community members in the review, development and adaptation of several research tools. Specific methods used to gather data included: surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, community forums and evaluation workgroups. Data was also collected via a thematic youth photovoice project. Qualitative data included surveys from (n134) of AIAN people living in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, (n10) key informant interviews with community stakeholders, youth (n6) and adult focus group participants (n9).

The secondary data presented in this report represent wellness indicators from publicly available county, state and federal data sets. The data include population-level measures that are known to impact multiple domains of health and community wellness, such as morbidity and mortality, as well as social, economic and education factors.

The primary and secondary data were analyzed to identify and prioritize needs across multiple domains of wellness in the community. Using Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR), twelve priority areas were identified that would address the inequities and needs of the AIAN populations in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.

Summary of Secondary Data

The secondary data included in this report highlight AIAN epidemiology and disparities in the following domains:

- State, county-level and local AIAN population data
- Education attainment
- Youth mental health outcomes
- Rates of bullying and harassment
- Rates of substance use
- Involvement in carceral systems
- Youth gang membership
- Rates of disability
- Youth physical fitness
- Youth involvement in social service and foster systems
- Childhood trauma
- Health insurance access

In a number of domains, including mental health outcomes, racial health disparities are identified between AIAN and non-Hispanic white survey respondents. For example, AIAN students experience higher rates of depression-related feelings and suicidal ideation, as compared to non-Hispanic white respondents.

In identifying the AIAN population in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, 26,106 (2.02%) individuals identify as AIAN alone or in combination with one or more races (US Census Bureau, 2018) and of those, approximately 40% of the population consists of AIAN people who are under the age of 24.

Summary of Primary Data

Community Assets and Strengths

Over two years, the AIH&S Community Advisory Council (CAC) developed a formal definition of community assets and sub-domains. These community assets and strengths were identified with multiple primary data collection modalities. AIH&S conducted Community Asset Mapping (CAM) which leveraged existing knowledge of community resources. The results are presented in the following categories within this report: individuals, activities, values, cultural wisdom, places, events, groups, programs and services, organizations, funders, media, and information.

Community Wellness Needs Data

The wellness needs of the community are identified using a Medicine Wheel that includes multiple community-defined domains of health. Each category includes a community definition of the domain, quantitative health and service-delivery indicators, as well as qualitative themes identified from the primary data. The report utilizes these domains to identify the wellness needs in the following areas:

1. Spiritual health and traditional healing
2. Mental health and substance use
3. Emotional health
4. Physical and environmental health

Notably, in the domain of emotional health, 96% of respondents reported that if community activities were offered on a regular basis, they would attend. Community readiness for a System of Care was assessed based on the community's current perspectives regarding native youth wellness. A social marketing plan was developed by the community to address the need to raise awareness and community readiness levels in the domains of

Community Efforts, Knowledge about the Issue, and Resources Related to the 'Issue' (Native youth wellness). (Appendix B & C).

Discussion

The Discussion and Future Directions section of this report utilizes a social determinants of health framework to synthesize the primary and secondary data, examining the multitude of individual, community, structural risk and protective factors that impact the wellness of AIANs in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. The risk and protective factors identified through the primary analysis are reviewed in a socio-cultural-historical context.

All primary and secondary data was utilized to account and assess the multidimensional and complex wellness needs of the AIAN community. However, there remains a lack of quality data for the AIAN population in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, especially around including AIAN populations in data collection for different federal, state, and local governmental agencies, as well as the lack of consistency in those defined as AIAN populations. In addition, with respect to health and social service systems in the counties, the largest need identified is improvement of cross-service system integration with traditional health services and coordination of care.

Summary & Recommendations

This report details the unique needs of the overall wellness in health, social services and settings of the AIAN youth and families in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. It provides an overall health and social examination of the strengths, assets and needs of the community members living in these areas, outlining health disparities experienced by the AIAN community. This report is an integral component in the process of building a comprehensive, accessible and culturally centered System of Care. Furthermore, the results of this report reflect the AIAN community's readiness for a community-led model of community wellness and System of Care that addresses the health and social service disparities within the population.

The following are the priorities/service system recommendations identified by the community in order to create a viable System of Care for AIAN youth and families:

1. Increase coordination of wellness resources and services for AIAN youth and families across Santa Barbara & Ventura Counties.
2. Engage stakeholders, community partners and local agencies in addressing the needs of the AIAN community.
3. Increase youth services and programming to address wellness needs.
4. Address stigma related to mental health and wellness services for youth, families and elders.
5. Workforce and economic development.
6. Address housing resources and economic development programming and services for Native families.
7. Develop resources and programming for Native youth in the foster care system.
8. Develop a resource guide for AIAN youth and families with services in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties as well as national wellness resources and help-lines.
9. Increase access and utilization of culturally centered recovery resources.
10. Develop training for providers in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties on cultural humility/sensitivity and best practices for working with Native families.
11. Engage local tribal partnerships to coordinate activities and services delivery strategies for youth and families.
12. Increase the availability of culturally centered programs and services for youth and families.

The AIH&S Community Wellness Report ultimately provides an assessment and the beginnings of a roadmap to guide the AIAN community, decision makers, funders, and stakeholders in implementing a System of Care to address community health and wellness. This report also serves as documentation

of a community-based participatory model in completing a strength based needs assessment of a community experiencing high rates of health disparities and social inequity. Overall, the report is an example of a successful, collaborative process with the goal of improved community wellness for AIAN people in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.





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