Health Equity

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National Indian Health Board
Board of Trustees Meeting
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Presentation Overview

Why focus on health equity?

What have we learned from NIHB’s work the last few years?

Health Equity in the AI/AN context: Traditional Values, Federal Trust Responsibility, and Tribal Sovereignty

Plan for Health Equity Focus at NIHB – Health Equity World Café, Health Equity Summit and NTHC conference

Questions
A moment for action

Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

JANUARY 20, 2021 • PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

ADVANCING EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
Where you live influences how long you live
Figure 6. Life expectancy at birth, by race and Hispanic origin and sex: United States, 2019

- Hispanic female: 84.4 years
- Non-Hispanic white female: 81.3 years
- Hispanic male: 79.1 years
- Non-Hispanic black female: 78.1 years
- Non-Hispanic white male: 76.3 years
- Non-Hispanic AIAN female: 75.0 years
- Non-Hispanic black male: 71.3 years
- Non-Hispanic AIAN male: 68.6 years

Good health begins in the places where we live, learn, work and play.

Social Determinants of Health

- **Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods**
- **Racism, discrimination, and violence**
- **Education, job opportunities, and income**
- **Access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities**
- **Polluted air and water**
- **Language and literacy skills**
What about uniquely Tribal determinants of health?

Federal Indian Policy  
Unique political status as Tribal citizens  
Forced relocation from ancestral lands  
Spiritual & faith-based practices  

Tribal justice systems  
Involuntary assimilation  
Traditional values  
Boarding schools  

Persecution of traditional ways of life, spiritual practices, and language  
Indigenous knowledge & culture  
Physical and cultural genocide  
Indigenous languages
What does health equity look like?

Image courtesy of Pennsylvania Department of Public Health
“Health equity means the attainment of the highest level of health for all people, where everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, preferred language, or other factors that affect access to care and health outcomes.”
Defining health equity:

Finding the Tribal perspective

CMS:

“Health equity means the attainment of the highest level of health for all people, where everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, preferred language, or other factors that affect access to care and health outcomes.”

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:

“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences - including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”
Frame the national conversation around health equity for Indian Country

• **NIHB Mission Statement:**
  Established by the Tribes to advocate as the united voice of federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, NIHB seeks to reinforce Tribal sovereignty, strengthen Tribal health systems, secure resources, and build capacity to achieve the highest level of health and well-being for our People.
Guiding Questions

What does health equity mean for Indian Country?

What are the historical and current drivers of health inequities for AI/AN?

How can traditional values and Indigenous ways of knowing show us a path forward for health equity?

What is the role of the federal trust responsibility in shaping health equity for AI/AN?

How does Tribal Sovereignty make the pursuit of AI/AN health equity unique?

Building consensus around a vision for AI/AN health equity
Health Equity at NIHB 2022

- Environmental Scan
- Internal Scan
- National Tribal Health Conference
- Key Informant Interviews
- Health Equity Summit
- World Café during TPHS
Environmental Scan

ACADEMIC LITERATURE
American Indian health disparities: psychosocial influences

Donald Warne* and Denise Lajimodiere
North Dakota State University

Inter-Generational Basis for Chronic Disease Disparities Among American Indians and Alaska Natives

Historical Trauma

Gestational Stressors

Childhood Stressors

Adulthood Stressors

Chronic Disease Disparities

Birth

WIC

FDPIR

Boarding School Experiences
- Abuse (physical, sexual)
- Neglect
- Abandonment
- Forced Removal
- Loss of culture & language
- Forced Christianity
- Lost traditional parenting & family structure

Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Abuse (physical, sexual)
- Neglect
- Substance Abuse in home
- Mental Health Dx in home
- Witnessing violence
- Divorce
- Food insecurity
- Family member in prison

Adverse Adulthood Experiences
- Alcoholism & SA
- Suicide rates / death rates
- Poverty / Poor nutrition
- Racism
- Role models
- Few positive
- Many negative
- Parenting

Next generation
American Indian and Alaska Native Health & Wellness Equity Model

Individual & Family

Goals – Happiness – Achievements – Aspirations – Targets

Governments – Governments – Governments

Barriers – Barriers – Barriers

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AI/AN Health and Wellness Equity – **Individual & Family**

- Accurate historical information
- Affordable, safe housing
- Broadband and communication
- Cultural activities and traditions
- Disability services
- Early childhood development services
- Economic development
- Education (Tribal)
- Equitable law and justice (Tribal)
- Extended family culture
- Financial services
- Health, affordable and nutritious food
- Healthy built and natural environments
- Health services (Tribal)
- Job training
- Livable job wages
- Parks, green spaces, and nature
- Safe, efficient transportation
- Subsistence traditional food/shelter/materials
- Spiritual/faith practices
- Water, air, land

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American Indian and Alaska Native Health & Wellness Equity Model

Individual & Family

Barriers - Barriers - Governments

Governments - Governments - Achievements - Aspirations - Targets

Goals - Happiness - Achievements - Aspirations - Targets

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Environmental Scan

LESSONS FROM NIHB’S PREVIOUS WORK
TPHS 2016: Strategic Planning to Achieve Health Equity in Tribal Communities

Goals of the Institute

Define the role of social determinants of health in shaping the health of Tribal populations.

Use and incorporate the social determinants of health and health equity into Tribal health department strategic planning.
Results of Strategic Planning Work

To support capacity at the Tribal health department level, NIHB developed a strategic planning framework with emphasis on achieving health equity.

NIHB has conducted learning institutes, webinars, and one-on-one capacity building trainings to support Tribal and non-Tribal health departments to achieve health equity through strategic planning.
July 2016: NIHB and Office of Minority Health (OMH) Environmental Scan

Question:

• Can **public health accreditation** be a vehicle to achieve health equity in Tribal communities?

Methods:

• **Focus groups and surveys** with Tribes, Area Indian Health Boards, and Tribal Epidemiology Centers to provide input on health equity and social determinants of health in Tribes.
Results of NIHB/OMH Scan

Challenges

- Insufficient **resources** (staff, training, facilities, culturally relevant resources, TA etc)
- Lack of understanding of role of **social determinants of health**
- Largest barrier: lack of access to quality **data**

Opportunities

- Cross-jurisdictional relationships
- Capacity building for Tribes
- Direct, flexible funding to Tribes
2017 – Building Public Health Capacity to Advance Equity (Denver Summit)

Goals

To explore how Tribal nations conceptualize and engage in health equity work

To outline the opportunities and barriers for Tribal public health agencies to play a more elevated role in advancing health equity.
### Findings

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<th>Need for <strong>community specific strategies</strong> to advance health equity in Tribal communities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Need for each Tribal <strong>community to define</strong> what health equity means for them</td>
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<td>Current work was found to be aimed at improving health and wellness in Tribal communities more generally rather than a health equity focus.</td>
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<td><strong>Three aspects unique to Tribal communities</strong> that can serve to advance health equity: traditional values, the federal trust responsibility, and Tribal sovereignty.</td>
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2021 NTHC Health Equity Listening Session

- Lessons from four groups:
  - History Leads to Health Disparities
  - Cultural competence and Holistic Approach Necessary
  - Role of Social Determinants
  - Funding and Data needs
2021 NTHC Health Equity Listening Session

“Recapture, reinvigorate, reflower our indigenous identities to create an equitable future.”
Key Themes

- Address injustices
- Commitment to broad spectrum action
- Traditional values
- Federal trust responsibility
- Tribal Sovereignty
What’s next?

May 13: World Café
• Drivers of health inequities in Indian Country
• What are the key questions?

Summer: Key Informant Interviews
• What does an AI/AN framing of health equity look like?

August 16: Summit
• Role of data in understanding and addressing health inequities
• How federal agencies can address barriers to AI/AN health equity

Sept: NTHC
• Innovative Tribal approaches to addressing health equity

Centering Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous identity: the path to achieving health equity
Thank you!

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