# Centering Community in Tribal Maternal Mortality Prevention

Preetha Raj, MPH Karen Alexander, PhD, LMSW



#### **Program Overview**

*Our Vision*: Ensuring healthy mothers, children, and families means understanding the proximal and distal causes of maternal morbidity and mortality. For Tribes, this requires a review process that reflects the unique histories, cultures, and stories that affect maternal health. In partnership with the CDC, NIHB supports the development of Tribal Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs) to collect and evaluate maternal health data leading to prevention recommendation.

**Project goal:** To establish and support the development of a Tribally- led MMRC process that actively engages Tribal communities, incorporates cultural values and voices, and develops sustainable strategies to prevent maternal deaths in Indian Country.

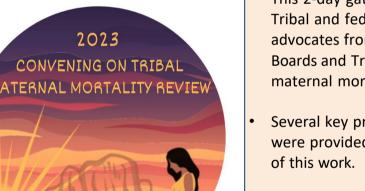
**Why?** A Tribal Maternal Mortality Review process will allow Tribal nations to control the data and respond to maternal deaths as they determine appropriate. It is critical to establish a committee that can effectively develop equitable solutions across Indian Country.

## **Program Activities**

The CDC began partnering with NIHB in 2018 to explore the development of Tribal MMRCs. Over the past year, our program has:

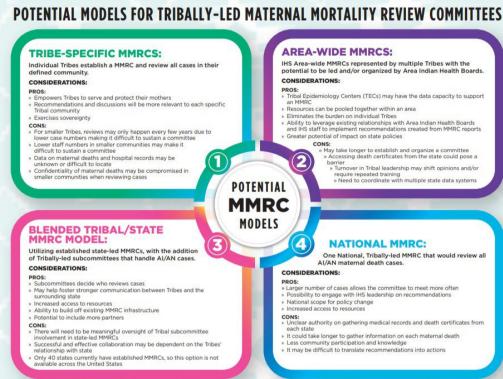
- 1. Hosted a national convening on Tribal MMRCs on the sacred lands of the Santa Ana Pueblo Tribe.
- 2. Presented NIHB's role in the development of Tribal MMRCs at:
  - -Tribal Partners Meeting, MUM 2024
  - -Tribal Maternal Health Institute, NTHC 2024
  - -Tribal MMRCs Workshop, CityMatCH 2024
- 3. Developed the 2023 Tribal MMRC Convening Summary Report
- 4. The Law & Policy Considerations for Tribal MMRCs Report
- 5. Hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Maternal Health Promotion Institute





- This 2-day gathering successfully brought together 60+ maternal health experts,
   Tribal and federal partners, representatives from community organizations, and
   advocates from across the nation, including our partners from Area Indian Health
   Boards and Tribal Epidemiology Centers, to address the critical and complex issue of
   maternal mortality among AI/AN communities.
- Several key presentations, small break out group discussions, and roundtable sessions were provided to engage participants in peer-to-peer learning to help shape the future of this work.
- This format allowed attendees to learn about existing MMRCs and explore models for Tribally-led MMRCs, sharing perspectives and insights to move maternal mortality prevention work forward, including the exploration of new approaches outside the current MMRC process.

#### **Tribal MMRC Models**



- Currently, there are no Tribally-led MMRCs, and many states lack Tribal representation on existing MMRCs.
- NIHB is working to assist Tribes and Tribal organizations in exploring the possibilities of designing and implementing Tribally-led MMRCs.
- The 4 models are intended to be a starting point for conversations. There is still a possibility for other models and considerations.

#### **Next Steps**

#### **Upcoming Events:**

- 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Maternal Health Promotion Institute
- -Virtual, 3-day webinar series April 15-17
- -Featuring three Tribal Maternal Health experts supporting maternal mortality prevention initiatives
- -Highlighting community-driven health solutions for maternal health
- -Building a network of advocates for Tribal Maternal Health promotion
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convening on Tribal Maternal Mortality Prevention
  - -In-person, 3-day meeting June 2-4 in Denver, CO
  - -National gathering of Tribal maternal & child health experts to discuss the development of Tribal MMRCs
  - -Centering maternal morbidity and mortality on prevention, resilience, and culture

### Reports

2023 Convening on Tribal MMRCs Summary Report Tribal MMRCs Law & Policy Considerations Report





#### **Connect with us!**

#### NIHB MCH Team

Preetha Raj, Project Lead: praj@nihb.org

Chelsea Bellon (Yankton Sioux), Contractor: chelseabellon@gmail.com

Karen Alexander, PhD, LMSW (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians),
Associate Director: kalexander@nihb.org