



## **American Indian Research Program**

American Indians<sup>1</sup> face unique health challenges and disparities, from having the highest rates of diabetes, heart disease and asthma among any racial/ethnic group to experiencing persistent barriers to health care and insurance. American Indian health leaders also experience a scarcity of resources and data on a broad range of health topics for advocacy, program planning and decision making.

The American Indian Research Program (AIRP), based at the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, was among the first health policy research programs in the nation to address these issues. Established in 1998, the program draws upon Center expertise and partnership with other researchers and tribal and urban community groups. It also draws upon its location - California, the state with the largest American Indian population in the nation. That proximity allows program staff to work directly to improve the health of American Indian populations through native-grounded research and evaluation, as well as through analysis of California Health Interview Survey (CHIS).

## **Current Research, Evaluation and Technical Assistance Projects**

**American Indian Elder Health in California** California has the largest state population of elderly American Indians. The U.S. American Indian elderly population is projected to increase from 6% of the total American Indian population in 1990 to 13% - or more than 200,000 elderly - in 2050. Yet no state-wide data currently exists on this vulnerable population. This project aims to increase the availability of health related data, and increase governmental and non-profit/foundation effort to address the health related needs of Native elders. Guided by a Native Elder Health Working Group the project will analyze a broad range of data to produce a policy brief as well as unique community gatherings on major health issues that will enable service providers, health advocates, and policy makers to set priorities and allocate resources. **Funded by:** The California Indian Health Service, the Mayo Clinic Spirit of Eagles, the UCLA Tribal Learning Community and Educational Exchange. Additional interest from partners and funders is welcome.

**The California Health Interview Survey (CHIS)** CHIS is an on-going collaborative public health initiative of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the California Department of Health Services, and the Public Health Institute. The purpose of the survey is to collect information about the health status and access to health care of the state's diverse population for use by public health researchers, planners, and state and local health care officials. The AIRP staff serves in many scientific capacities on CHIS, including collaboration on methodology, implementation, and data dissemination. CHIS provides the largest sample of American Indians in any U.S. health survey. See the CHIS website for current and trend data and funders at [www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu).

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<sup>1</sup> American Indian refers to American Indian and Alaska Native people.

**The American Indian Cancer Collaborative for Women's Health** Cancer is the third leading cause of death for American Indians of all ages. Breast cancer is among the most common forms of cancer in American Indian women. The first objective of the project is to expand breast and cervical cancer (BCC) infrastructures. The second objective is the expansion and enhancement of trainings and technical assistance to provide cultural sensitivity training, social marketing skills and other outreach skills. The AIRP will provide its expertise, technical assistance and consultation by providing cultural competency training and navigating urban health systems curriculum. **Funded by:** Native American Cancer Research, Inc. through a contract from the CDC.

**System of Care Model (SCM) for American Indian children** Few culturally and linguistically-appropriate mental health services exist for native peoples. This project will implement a SCM for delivering mental health services to urban American Indian children (ages 0-21) in Los Angeles County who have a serious emotional disturbance. The overall goal of the project is to strengthen culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health services for the American Indian community, drawing upon the feedback of patients, family members and health care providers. The AIRP leads the project's evaluation and serves as research methodologists. **Funded by:** The United American Indian Involvement, Inc. (UAI) through a grant from the Child Mental Health Initiative from The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

**Redhawk Suicide Prevention Project** American Indian youth have the highest rates of suicide in the nation. This project is aimed at developing and implementing a youth suicide early intervention program to serve American Indian children and youth in California. The AIRP serves as an evaluator and provides guidance in project methods. **Funded by:** The Los Angeles United American Indian Involvement, Inc. through a cooperative agreement with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, US DHHS.

**Garden of Health Project** Urban American Indian populations have high rates of diabetes and obesity while exhibiting an increasing disconnect with the diet and active rural practices of their traditional cultures. The project aims to reconnect urban American Indians with culturally-appropriate healthy activities and nutrition through the development of community gardens, as well as science based youth curricula lessons and cooking education. The Center's AIRP serves as the evaluator. **Funded by:** Los Angeles United American Indian Involvement, Inc. through a grant from the CDC.

### **Public Service**

The AIRP staff participates in many national and local public health efforts aimed at improving access and quality of health care. Among these activities are active membership in the Native Research Network, Inc., the [American](#) Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Caucus of APHA, and the Spirit of Eagles, Mayo Native Programs.

**To view all current and past research and evaluation studies or to obtain a copy of any of the publications please visit our website at:**

**[www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu](http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu)**

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