

Criminalization of Substance Use Among Pregnant Women in Tribal Communities



March 22, 2018



Welcome and agenda

Welcoming Remarks

Dawn Levinson, Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services (DHSPS)

Expert Presentation

Puneet Sahota, Research Director, National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)

Q/A and Discussion

Puneet Sahota, NICWA



Pretest

- The main barrier faced by American Indian/Alaska Native pregnant women from seeking care for substance use is:
 - A) Historic trauma
 - B) Poverty
 - C) Lack of access to health care
 - D) All of the above



Welcoming Remarks from the Division of Healthy Start and Perinatal Services



Your expert presenter today:
Puneet Sahota, MD, PhD
Research Director
National Indian Child Welfare Association

Introduction to NICWA

- National Indian Child Welfare Association
- Dedicated to the well being of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families
- Support safety, health, and spiritual strength of AI/AN children
- Founded in 1983, first in response to training needs for AI/AN child welfare workers



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

NICWA Membership

- Membership based
- Individuals and organizations
- Tribal governments
- Urban and reservation-based social service programs
- Staff who work with AI/AN children and families



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

NICWA Work

- Public policy and advocacy
- Community development
- Training and technical assistance
- Response to inquiries from families, tribal staff, others
- Research in service to these
- Annual conference to prevent child abuse and neglect



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Core Issue Areas

- Child abuse and neglect
- Indian Child Welfare Act
- Foster care and adoption
- Children's mental health
- Youth engagement
- Juvenile justice
- Contexts for child well-being (e.g., substance use in families)



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Substance Use in Pregnancy

- Substance use is a factor in the majority of child welfare cases in AI/AN communities.
- Women using substances in pregnancy may come in contact with multiple systems, including health care, child welfare, and justice systems (e.g., tribal and state).



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Historical Trauma

- Historical and intergenerational trauma underlies substance use
- Self-medication for emotional pain a leading reason for AI/AN people to use substances in prior research and clinical experience



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Historical Trauma

- Indigenous healing practices outlawed
- Boarding schools
- Forced sterilization
- Removal of AI/AN children
- Misuse of data and research
- Disruption of cultural transmission and intergenerational trauma



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Barriers to Care

- Historic traumas result in barriers to seeking care for substance use for AI/AN women
- Mistrust of health care, social service systems
- Drug testing without consent feels similar to forced sterilization
- Fear of losing children after forced removals of the past



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Systemic Barriers to Care

- Poverty
- Intergenerational trauma
- Poor social support
- Lack of access to health care – accessing substances is easier than getting needed services in some rural areas, for example



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Pregnant Women's Perspectives

- Very little research on this topic in Indian Country
- Studies in the general population are also limited, but have shown women will avoid prenatal care, isolate themselves socially to avoid detection as using substances because they are afraid their children will be removed (Stone 2015)



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Problems with Criminalization

- Criminalization shown in research to be ineffective, harmful to both mother and baby because of mother avoiding prenatal care
- No published accounts found, or anecdotal experiences known, in colleague consultation of criminalization in tribal communities



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Best Practices

- Culturally based treatment
- Community based approach
- Medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorder
- Integrated care between obstetrics care, substance use care, mental health, and case management
- Collaboration between child welfare and health care systems



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Best Practices

- Maternal Outreach and Mitigation Services (MOMs) program, White Earth Nation
- Intensive outpatient, case management, mental health services, parenting groups, cultural groups, medication-assisted treatment referral, prenatal care



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Best Practices

- Parenting, early childhood education, nutrition classes, support services for infants and children, supportive housing on site
- “MOMS fully involved in this program will not have their child removed at birth for being in subutex. Indian child welfare fully supports the program as a way to stay out of child protection” (White Earth Cultural Div.)



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Best Practices

- Wrapped in Hope: collaboration of health care systems, public health with Confederated Tribes of the Salish and Kootenai
- Prenatal care, psychotherapy, and substance use counseling provided in same location
- Reduces stigma, helps with access to treatment



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

References

- Stone, R. Pregnant Women and Substance Use: Fear, Stigma, and Barriers to Care. Health and Justice, 2015, 3:2.
- White Earth Cultural Program, MOMS Program.
http://www.whiteearthculturaldivision.com/application/files/2014/4373/7120/MOMSPProgram_Brochure_v2_1.pdf
- Montana Health Care Foundation. Wrapped in Hope.
<https://mthcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Wrapped-in-Hope-PPT.pdf>



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

Puneet Sahota, MD, PhD
Research Director
psahota@nicwa.org



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

www.nicwa.org



Key Takeaways

- Historic trauma a major contributor to substance use
- Pregnant women face multiple barriers to accessing substance use care
- Best practice: culturally-based, integrated treatment between prenatal care and behavioral health



Posttest

- The main barrier faced by American Indian/Alaska Native pregnant women from seeking care for substance use is:
 - A) Historic trauma
 - B) Poverty
 - C) Lack of access to health care
 - D) All of the above

Wrap Up and Reminders

Upcoming Webinars:

April 26 from 3-4pm ET: Criminalization webinar with National Advocates for Pregnant Women

May 2018: Building your Referral Network

EPIC Center website: <http://www.healthystartepic.org>

AStEPP Resources

Includes all recorded webinars, transcripts, and slide presentations