

# **NCUIH Provides Recommendations to Federal Government Regarding Important Native Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Program**

Category: Policy Blog

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On January 30, 2024, the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) submitted written comments to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Office of Tribal Affairs in response to SAMHSA's [July 2023 framing paper](#) and October 2023 urban Indian organization (UIO) listening session concerning the development of the funding formula for the Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Resources for Native Americans (BHSUDRNA) Program. NCUIH's comments make seven key recommendations to SAMSHA when developing the funding methodology for the BHSUDRNA program.

## **Background**

NCUIH, UIOs, Tribes, and Tribal Organizations worked closely with Congress to create a new Behavioral Health program modeled in part after the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) to expand access to behavioral health funding for Native communities. Congress authorized this program via the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 \(CAA 2023\)](#). The purpose of the Program is to provide services for the prevention of, treatment of, and recovery from mental health and substance use disorders among American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. The BHSUDRNA Program will be operated by SAMHSA in consultation with the Indian Health Service. Eligible entities include Urban Indian organizations.

## **NCUIH's Recommendations**

In its comments, NCUIH recommended that SAMHSA:

- Ensure noncompetitive Program awards across the IHS/Tribal Organization/UIO (I/T/U) system.
- Account for administrative duties in the funding formula.
- Respect Traditional Healing and Indigenous Knowledge in the funding formula.
- Ensure program measures do not impose additional burdensome reporting requirements.
- Ensure that all information related to program application is widely available.
- Seek additional expert feedback from Tribal Advisory Committees and Federal Agencies
- Continue to engage with and incorporate UIO feedback in the development of the Program.

While Congress authorized \$80 million in appropriations for this Program in each of Fiscal Years (FY) 2023-2027, Congress has not yet appropriated the necessary funding for the Program since its authorization. As part of its comments, NCUIH called on the Biden Administration to request that Congress fully fund the Program at the authorized levels.

NCUIH will continue to monitor the development of the funding formula for the BHSUDRNA Program and continue to advocate for Congress to fully fund the Program.