

PRESS RELEASE: NCUIH Releases Financing Toolkit for Providers to Address Behavioral Health Disparities in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 9, 2024) – The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) has released a new resource to combat the significant mental health challenges facing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. The toolkit, ***Investing in Wellness: Financing Strategies for Behavioral Health in Indian Country***, developed in response to the alarming statistic that 19 percent of AI/AN individuals reported experiencing a mental illness in the past year, seeks to provide sustainable funding solutions and resources to enhance behavioral health care access in Indian Country.

The toolkit comes at a time when behavioral health issues among AI/AN communities have not received equal policy attention or funding. Existing funding models often rely on short-term grants that inadequately address the persistent and complex needs of these communities. ***“The Investing in Wellness toolkit is essential for bridging the funding gap in behavioral health services,”*** said NCIUH CEO Francys Crevier, J.D. (Algonquin). ***“We aim to equip leaders with practical financing strategies tailored specifically for American Indian and Alaska Native health care systems, ultimately improving access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services. By focusing on the patient journey and incorporating traditional healing practices into behavioral health programming, the toolkit aligns with the growing advocacy for holistic approaches in treatment.”***

Key strategies outlined in the toolkit include:

- Enhancing Behavioral Health Care Access Through Optimizing Medicaid Reimbursement
- Traditional Healing as a Financially Sustainable Strategy for Improving Behavioral Health
- Cultivating Funding Opportunities for Behavioral Health Programming
- Investing in Prevention, Crisis Care, and Integrated Services
- Strategies to Build, Expand, and Sustain Behavioral Health

The development of this toolkit was guided by a community-based participatory approach, ensuring that the needs and voices of AI/AN communities were central to its creation. ***“Culturally sensitive care is an important part of any treatment regimen. The Investing in Wellness toolkit notably supports traditional healing practices, such as therapeutic talking circles and natural remedies, as proven ways to support person-centered health and wellness,”*** said Alaina McBournie, senior manager for the substance use prevention and treatment initiative at The Pew Charitable Trusts. ***“Pew is proud to partner with NCUIH to help expand access to lifesaving services for American Indian and Alaska Native people.”***

Investing in Wellness: Financing Strategies for Behavioral Health in Indian Country

TOOLKIT



About NCUIH

The National Council of Urban Indian Health is a national non-profit organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally competent health and public health services for American Indian and Alaska Native people living in urban areas. NCUIH advocates for the 41 Title V Urban Indian Organizations under the Indian Health Service in the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*.

NCUIH respects and supports Tribal sovereignty and the unique government-to-government relationship between our Tribal Nations and the United States. NCUIH works to support those federal laws, policies, and procedures that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship. NCUIH does not support any federal law, policy, or procedure that infringes upon or in any way diminishes Tribal sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship.

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