



# Preventing Racial Misclassification

## Do's and Don'ts for Funeral Directors

NCUIH supports the use of these recommendations for those involved in the racial identification process documenting the death of members of the American Indian or Alaska Native AI/AN community.

### Do's

- ➔ Remember that any family you serve could have members who identify as AI/AN, regardless of their appearance, where they live, and the tribal status of other family members
- ➔ Always verbally ask about race, Hispanic origin, and tribal affiliation
- ➔ Have [definitions of race and ethnicity](#) categories handy
- ➔ Collect racial information yourself
- ➔ Have answers prepared to common questions such as “why do you need to know this?” ahead of time
- ➔ Prepare for occasional discomfort by family members
- ➔ Learn how to manage your own discomfort
- ➔ Pay attention to non-verbal communication like body language
- ➔ Ensure your worksheets and forms allow for multiple races, ethnicities, and tribal affiliations to be entered
- ➔ Ensure that any worksheets you use have an option for people to identify their race as “American Indian or Alaska Native”
- ➔ If you give the family a worksheet to complete the death certificate, verify the form item-by-item with the family as you enter demographic items electronically
- ➔ Proactively familiarize yourself with tribal customs or benefits they may offer after death
- ➔ Learn how to contact tribes or Bureau of Indian Affairs for burial assistance
- ➔ Complete continuing education trainings that include death certification procedures and cultural competency
- ➔ Lastly, always practice compassion

### Don'ts

- ➔ Do not assume you know race just by looking at the individual
- ➔ Avoid copying racial information from other professionals, such as from hospital or medical records, face sheets, and/or transport documents
- ➔ Do not require families to “prove” race or ethnicity
- ➔ Do not leave families out of the identifying process
- ➔ Do not forget to consider tribal customs and beliefs
- ➔ Do not forget to apply learnings from educational trainings you have taken
- ➔ Do not respond with hostility or any other negative emotions, even if faced with pushback
- ➔ Do not forget to look over your work

Please visit our [website](#) to learn more details from the full report documenting common practices shown to lead to racial misclassification in the AI/AN community