

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Discussed at the Researcher Meeting Convened by NIJ

March 31 & April 1, 2009

NIJ convened a meeting of researchers working in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, and other federal partners to discuss the proposed program of research under section 904 of the Violence Against Women Act of 2005.

Following presentations by NIJ on the proposed program of research discussion centered on the following issues.

- *Sampling.* Participants raised a number of challenges that will be involved in carrying out a random sample for the primary data collection phase of the project. These centered around difficulty of accessing the study population, the practical challenges of attempting a nationally representative survey (for example, such as cost and time), the diversity of the study population and the representativeness of the sample that may result. Researchers highlighted that conducting a nationally tribally representative sample would require trade-offs with the study's ability to collect in-depth, specific contextual data. Researchers suggested that in order to conduct a representative random sample, household enumeration methods would be necessary, and suggested that NIJ work with other partners that may be able to assist with this phase.
- *Enrollment Status.* Researchers felt that the issue of enrollment status has material importance in terms of the proposed program of research, and its stated goals. Given that tribes do not have jurisdiction over non-enrolled members, researchers felt that the current program should focus only on enrolled members. They suggested that future studies be proposed to look at non-enrolled and non-reservation populations.
- *Age of Respondents.* Because of issues of consent, researchers suggested that the study confine itself to surveying women 18 years and older. They suggested that the study model other successfully-used techniques that ask about past-year and lifetime prevalence to be able to measure rates of victimization among both younger and older age groups.
- *Scales and Measures.* Researchers strongly suggested that the program of research model questions that have been used in both public health and public safety focused questionnaires to enable comparison between the data collected as part of these various efforts. They suggested that these questions may form the "core" of the questionnaire, and that additional questions could be included that collect data on behaviors and contexts that may be specific to the tribal environment.
- *Culturally appropriate methods, scales and measures.* Researchers were not aware of any existing scales and measures that were specifically appropriate to the tribal context. They cautioned against using a one-size-fits-all approach, and suggested that these should be developed in consultation with tribes, and use both qualitative and quantitative methods.

- *Modes of Administration.* Researchers agreed that face-to-face data collection would yield the most reliable information. They also suggested the use of case-studies to aid in bringing context to the data and analysis. Researchers suggested using Native American interviewers from the same linguistic group and suggested that NIJ be guided by the participating community in terms of protecting confidentiality and interviewer selection. Researchers supported extensive and standardized “core” training for interviewers, providing opportunities for debriefing, and the development of safety plans for interviewers and interviewees. Researchers also supported capacity-building within participant communities by training and utilizing local researchers and interviewers.
- *Location of Interviews.* Researchers reported that neutral, structured locations such as community centers and healthcare facilities have been successfully used in other research of this nature. They highlighted issues such as community knowledge of the research focus, and suggested strategies that may help mitigate this.
- *Ethical considerations.* Researchers raised issues such as interviewer/interviewee safety, and mandatory reporting requirements for interviewers. They suggested that the program of research be sensitive to, and guided by tribal concerns on this issue.
- *Facilitating participation by tribal communities.* Researchers suggested the following strategies that have been successfully used by other tribally-focused studies: holding forums to inform the community about the research goals, making presentations to tribal governments and leadership, and using tribal listservs and newspapers. Researchers also suggested that other organizations like tribal colleges and the National Congress of American Indian may be essential resources for facilitating participation by tribal communities. They also suggested that the program use both Native and non-Native American researchers who have strong ties in the community under study to facilitate this process. Researchers suggested that in presenting this study to communities, NIJ must address issues like previous abuse of research up-front and underline the ways that the current project aims to mitigate these concerns.
- *Outreach & Marketing.* Researchers suggested that NIJ use multiple formats and venues to assist in informing the communities and ensuring continued tribal involvement and support. They suggested that the program may be more successful if it clearly outlined the benefits to the community and provide them with tangible resources created by participation in the study. They suggested that outreach and marketing materials address these benefits in terms of the legal, victim-focused, intergovernmental, and community benefits. Researchers suggested that appropriate feedback and outreach plans may vary by community, and will have to take into account available resources and internal tribal mechanisms and customs for sharing information.