

# **Appendix A**

## ***ACF Approach to Tribal Research***

American Indians and Alaska Natives are important participants in programs administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) governments are important partners in administering these programs. ACF funds tribal organizations to provide family financial assistance, child support, child care, Head Start, child welfare, and other programs with the goal of promoting the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.<sup>1</sup> Because American Indians and Alaska Native communities are unique, ACF has made an intentional effort to learn more about how ACF programs assist tribal communities and how tribal communities administer programs. The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within ACF currently has four such studies underway. Two are exploratory studies of specific populations or programs, and two are studies linked to ACF grants to tribal organizations.

Research in Indian Country or about AI/AN populations must recognize the sovereignty of tribal governments, their diversity and contexts, and their authority to limit and shape research conducted on or with their tribal members. Under U.S. law, federally recognized American Indian tribes are sovereign governments. The 565 federally-recognized tribes in the United States constitute distinct cultural as well as political groups. Inter- and intra-tribal diversity among AI/ANs can affect service delivery as well as research designs in Indian country. In addition, as a result of historical and more recent events (e.g., wars, appropriation of Indian lands, forced migrations, abrogation of treaties, racism, misunderstandings, and exploitative research), tribal leaders and members sometimes mistrust federal, state, or local initiatives, including research. Thus, in the last two decades, tribes, Native villages, and consortia have taken an increasingly active role in challenging, as well as generating, research and program evaluations. These entities seek opportunities to influence research agencies and to exercise the power to reject unwanted research on their lands and with their people. The emergence of research requirements by tribal Institutional Review Boards (IRB) has supported the influence of tribes on research conducted in their communities. Some tribes require prospective researchers to present the case for their research before tribal councils and/or to complete a tribal IRB process, while others do not. Tribes are concerned not only with informed consent

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<sup>1</sup> As officially recognized sovereign entities, many tribes have increasingly taken control of programs that serve tribal members. Over the past 20 years, the federal government has increasingly supported tribal self-governance and self-determination. Indian tribes and tribal consortia have been explicitly included in federal welfare reform initiatives such as TANF, Welfare-to-Work (WtW) grants, the Native Employment Works (NEW) program, and the Child Care Development Fund, as well as other programs such as the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Child Welfare Coordination Grants, Vocational Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation Grants. Congress and federal agencies administering these programs have supported Indian self-determination and tribal consultation in formulating legislative provisions and in developing policies and regulations. Legislation and regulations permit tribes to operate programs and, in recognition of their special circumstances, allow some degree of flexibility in program operation.

and the need to present information in a participant's primary language, but also with promotion of collaborative, participatory research models.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, ACF does not impose a research agenda on tribal communities, but aims to identify and develop opportunities for learning that are mutually agreeable to ACF and each community included in the study. The four current studies illustrate various types of research opportunities. Two of the studies are associated with ACF grants to tribal organizations. As a condition of receiving the grants, tribal organizations are required to participate in the evaluation, but the tribes first must determine that it is in their interest to participate. For example, the current study of Coordination of Tribal TANF and Child Welfare Services Grants provides value to participating tribal communities by supporting grantees in collecting their own data and building relationships with the tribal programs through a collaborative approach that supports the work of each grantee. The two other studies are descriptive and exploratory and aim to enable ACF to better understand and meet the needs of particular Indian populations and tribal-government program interactions. We want participating tribes and individuals to see and value the enhanced learning possibilities that participation in the studies can provide. ACF intends for each of the studies to provide useful information to the participating tribes as well as to tribal communities in general.

The four current studies are distinct. The Study of the Coordination of Tribal TANF and Child Welfare Services Grants examines the effectiveness of Tribal governments or Tribal consortia in coordinating child welfare services and services under Tribal TANF programs. The Evaluation of Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants provides opportunities for education and training in the healthcare professions to low-income adults living on Tribal reservations. The Understanding Urban Indian's Interaction with ACF Programs and Services Study identifies barriers and facilitators for urban AI/AN living in urban areas. The Descriptive Study of Tribal TANF Programs study will provide an in-depth, systemic description of program implementation, operations, outputs and outcomes in four selected sites.

Although they are distinct, these studies are coordinating and will be learning from each other. OPRE staff who oversee research in tribal communities meet monthly to share information. The principal investigators of the studies have also shared relevant information. Only two of the studies will be visiting two of the same tribal communities. The principal investigators for the studies have shared information about the timing of their visits, and site visitors will be aware that the tribes are participating in both studies. In addition, the ACF

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<sup>2</sup> Caldwell, J.Y., Davis, J.D., Du Bois, B., Echo-Hawk, H., Erickson, S., Goins, R.T., et al. 2005. "Culturally competent research with American Indians and Alaska Natives: Findings and recommendations of the First Symposium of the Work Group on American Indian Research and Program Evaluation Methodology." American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center.

Welfare Research and Evaluation Conference included a session on *Engaging Tribal Communities in Research*, during which the principal investigators of three of the current ACF research projects presented information on the purpose of their studies and discussed strategies to engage tribes in research.

Future ACF research projects involving tribal communities would benefit from knowledge gained from the current studies. Given the sovereignty of tribal governments and the diversity of tribal communities, it is very difficult for ACF research to pursue an overarching research agenda involving tribal communities. Nonetheless, ACF anticipates continuing to collaborate with tribal communities on research of mutual interest that increases understanding of ACF programs and how tribal-government program interactions can be improved.

## Summaries of Current ACF Research in Tribal Communities

### Understanding Urban Indians' Interactions with ACF Programs and Services

Project Officer: Anne Bergan

Contractor: Westat

Principal Investigator: Cynthia Robins

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funds state, territory, local, and tribal organizations to provide family financial assistance, child support, child care, Head Start, child welfare, and other programs with the goal of promoting the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities. While we know that urban Indians interact with ACF programs and services, we know little about the experiences and needs of urban Indians related to ACF. For the purposes of this project, a preliminary definition describes this group as individuals of American Indian and Alaska Native ancestry who may or may not have direct or active ties with a particular tribe, but who identify with and are at least somewhat active in the Native community in their urban area. This exploratory study seeks to enable ACF to understand a) the barriers and facilitators of access to ACF services among AI/AN living in urban areas; and b) the unmet service needs among these populations that ACF might be able to provide. In addition to exploring service barriers and facilitators for the urban AI/AN population, this study seeks to understand the role that urban Indian Organizations plays in helping urban Native families meet their social service needs. A technical workgroup to review research questions and study protocols will include researchers with tribal affiliations as well as a representative of the National Council of Urban Indian Health. The two year project began in September 2011 and is being conducted under contract with Westat. Because this project is focusing on urban areas and therefore involves organizations and populations not located on tribal reservations this study will not overlap with the tribal settings involved in the other studies being conducted.

### Study of Coordination of Tribal TANF and Child Welfare Services Grants

Project Officer: Anne Bergan

Contractor: James Bell Associates

Principal Investigator: Pirkko Ahonen

This project will study the approaches utilized by tribal organizations awarded grants for coordination of Tribal TANF and child welfare services to inform the field of practice as well as policymakers and funders at various levels. The purpose of these grants, as prescribed by statute, is to examine the effectiveness of tribal governments or tribal consortia in coordinating child welfare services and services under tribal TANF programs.

These grants will be used for one or more of the following statutorily prescribed uses:

1. To improve case management for families eligible for assistance from a Tribal TANF program;
2. For supportive services and assistance to tribal children in out-of-home placements and the tribal families caring for such children, including families who adopt such children; and
3. For prevention services and assistance to tribal families at risk of child abuse and neglect.

The study will document how tribal grantees are creating and adapting culturally relevant and appropriate approaches, systems and programs to increase coordination and enhance service delivery to address child abuse and neglect, by supporting grantees in collecting their own data and building relationships with the tribal programs through a collaborative approach that supports the work of each grantee. The study will also document challenges faced and lessons learned. Information developed through the contract is expected to be of value to ACF, to tribal communities, and to a range of stakeholders working with and serving tribal communities.

### **Evaluation of Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants (ETHPOG)**

Project Officers: Michael Dubinsky and Hilary Forster

Contractor: NORC at the University of Chicago, in partnership with Red Star Innovations and the National Indian Health Board

Principal Investigator: Michel Meit

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program, funded by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Affordable Care Act), provides opportunities for education and training for low-income individuals for healthcare professions that pay well and are expected to experience labor shortages. The HPOG program includes grants targeted to low-income individuals living on tribal reservations. Out of the 32 total HPOG grantees five grantees are tribal organizations or tribal colleges.

ACF is utilizing a multi-pronged evaluation strategy to assess the success of the HPOG demonstration projects. One component of this strategy is a comprehensive process and outcome evaluation of the Tribal HPOG grantees, led by NORC at the University of Chicago in conjunction with Red Star Innovations and the National Indian Health Board (NIHB). The goal of this evaluation is to provide documentation and lessons about diverse programmatic approaches to health professions training serving the tribal population. Interview and program operations data will be collected to provide an in-depth, systematic analysis of program implementation, operations, and outputs and outcomes in all tribal sites (information collection approved under OMB #0970-0395). Additionally, data will be compared within and across sites to examine correlations and patterns and generate hypotheses about the effectiveness of different program approaches for tribal populations.

The evaluation is built on a culturally-responsive approach. The Tribal HPOG grantees are continually engaged to ensure they understand the purpose and intent of the evaluation and how the information learned from it can benefit each Tribal community, and to build their capacity in using the evaluation findings for continuous quality improvement.

### **Descriptive Study of Tribal TANF Programs**

Project Officer: Girley Wright

Contractor: The Urban Institute, in partnership with Support Services International

Principal Investigator: Heather Hahn

The study will address a key policy research question: How are Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs being implemented in order to provide services for tribal members? Using interview and program operations data, the study will: 1) Provide an in-depth, systematic description of program implementation, operations, outputs and outcomes in selected sites; and 2) Identify promising practices and other areas for further study. The study will include interviews of Tribal TANF officials and staff and focus groups of Tribal TANF participants during site-visits to four Tribal TANF programs, and reviews of program data from Tribal TANF programs and other data sources.