



Adolescent Health Tribal Action Plan

A Strategic Plan for Addressing Mental Well-being in Native Youth for the Tribes of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington

August 2021

Purpose

This Action Plan highlights priority topic areas that may be used to direct and inform Native youth-driven mental health and suicide prevention efforts in the Pacific Northwest (NW) and beyond. This plan can be used by tribes, programs, policymakers, advocates, and social media outlets in their efforts to elevate youth's mental well-being.

NPAIHB Vision and Mission Statement

VISION: Native youth in the Pacific Northwest will meet their full potential – with health, safety, and success.

MISSION: Our mission is to encourage Native adolescents and young adults to realize and embrace their full potential for health and development, and to enhance the capacity of NW Tribes to promote adolescent health, safety, and well-being.

Tribal Health: Reaching out InVolves Everyone

Youth today face social and environmental pressures that have a direct impact on mental well-being and healthy behaviors. To better understand current mental health needs of Native youth, the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB) Tribal Health: Reaching out InVolves Everyone (THRIVE) administered a tribal youth needs assessment with THRIVE participants.

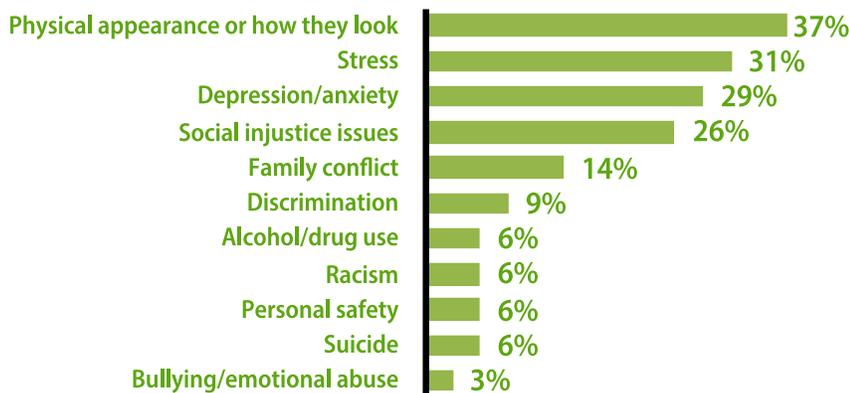
Data to Action

In the July 2021 THRIVE Needs Assessment youth provided insight into their mental well-being, help-seeking behavior, well-being information and resource needs, and the impact of COVID-19 and social injustice issues. Results of the Needs Assessment can inform current and future Native youth-based programming and address priority health topics to incorporate into THRIVE and We R Native's social media platforms over the next 12 months.

Overall Mental Well-being

In the 2021 THRIVE needs assessment, 75% of Native youth reported overall positive mental well-being but highlighted their top health concerns and needs.

TOP CONCERNS AMONG NATIVE YOUTH



75% of Native youth reported overall positive mental well-being

Figure 1. Percent of Native youth that reported being concerned by health topic (n = 35)



COVID-19, Social Injustice, and Mental Well-being

During the COVID-19 pandemic youth had to navigate social isolation, remote learning, and at times, complicated emotional and financial situations at home.

49% were not as active

34% felt more anxious and depressed

30% of Native youth felt their mental well-being was directly impacted

31% could not participate in cultural activities and ceremonies

23% suffered a death in the family due to COVID-19

Youth adapted and navigated the changing world by engaging in activities that supported their mental and physical well-being, which included talking to a family member or friend, playing video games, reading, and taking time to learn something new.

In addition to the pandemic, youth today are dealing with serious social injustice issues related to social, political, and environmental problems. The survey found nearly 40% of Native youth felt their mental health had been impacted by the recent issues of discrimination, racism, and social injustice issues plaguing our country such as the Keystone pipeline, murder of George Floyd and police brutality, Native mascots being removed, and COVID-19 disproportionately impacting Native communities.

40% of Native youth felt their mental health had been impacted by recent social injustice issues

Youth-Driven Solutions

Native youth identified health information resources that would support their mental well-being amidst current stressors.

Often, Native youth rely on intimate social and structural networks and social media for information on their mental well-being.

It is important to integrate these networks into supporting healthy behaviors of Native youth through prevention programming and educational efforts. We can broadly support youth's mental well-being by educating social networks and increasing the mental well-being resources available in youth-identified settings.

Health information that would support Native youth's mental well-being

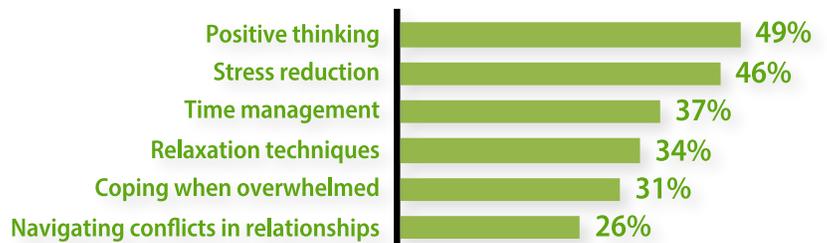


Figure 2. Percent of Native youth that requested resources and information by health behavior (n=35)

Intimate social networks serve as a trusted source of information for youth

63% trust family **49%** trust friends and peers **44%** trust healthcare professionals

Native youth would like to receive information on mental well-being via these methods

35% Social media

Snapchat Instagram TikTok



32% School



29% Youth Groups



29% Video Counseling



Strategies to Elevate Mental Well-Being

This section highlights strategies to elevate youth mental wellness based on existing research, current health needs, and youth-driven solutions using We R Native social media platforms.

Integrate Native culture

Native youth want tailored resources and information that incorporate traditional practices, language, and cultural resources. Integration of culture is important in the delivery of information and helping youth feel included, seen, and understood. This could include sharing traditional stories on positive thinking, engaging in Native practices in relaxation, and introducing culturally tailored activities to help cope when overwhelmed.

Create networks of support, connectedness, and engagement through digital media

Youth want to connect through social media to discuss difficult topics anonymously, connect with their peers, and access youth programs. Digital media, including social media and video games, helped youth stay connected and engage with their friends during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leverage frequently used digital media platforms

Youth prefer to receive information and resources on mental well-being from social and interactive media. The top social media platforms used by youth are Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms could be used to share culturally responsive techniques, activities, and information that support youth's mental well-being.

Educate family, friends, peers, and healthcare professionals on mental well-being priorities

Youth rely on family, friends and peers, and healthcare professionals to support their mental well-being. By tailoring education, strategies, and techniques to support networks such as parents and healthcare providers we can cast a wider net to support youth's mental well-being.

Address mental well-being in schools

Youth want schools to be involved in supporting their mental well-being. We can support the education system in elevating the health of Native youth by providing access to culturally tailored resources and services.

Support development of Native youth-based educational resources for school use

We can support our youth by developing culturally relevant resources in the school settings we can elevate health equity practices and tailor information in a culturally responsive way. Youth-based education resources could provide cultural tools to help youth manage stress, provide resources to support their academic achievement, and direct them to culturally tailored programs and services.

Provide tools, access to resources, and strategies to help youth

Youth want tools and strategies to cope when overwhelmed, and access to youth programs and techniques to help them with stress. Youth are dealing with family conflict, academic pressures, and bearing the weight of challenging social injustice issues. We can empower youth by providing tools and techniques on how to have difficult conversations and how to cope with difficult situations.



Use of Action Plan

It is important to not only listen to our youth, but to act on the information they shared, and to prioritize their mental well-being. This Action Plan is the first step to driving solutions that elevate the mental well-being of Native youth across tribal communities. Specific strategies outlined in this Action Plan have the potential to elevate youth mental well-being.

Recommendations

We can provide our youth the tools needed to live and maintain a healthy life through support, access to resources, and an increase in protective factors. By leveraging We R Native's social media presence we can provide cultural tools and meaningful connections that promote positive mental well-being. The proposed recommendation from this Action Plan is to integrate youth-identified solutions to address priority mental well-being topics in program planning, youth activities, and social media educational efforts.

Tools to Support Implementation

Several tools could be developed to support implementation of this Action Plan. Support may take different forms and involve multiple stakeholders at Tribal organizations, youth-based programs, educational institutions, and healthcare organizations.

CONDUCT A YOUTH MENTAL WELL-BEING REVIEW

Review the strategies that are currently being implemented to support youth's mental well-being. Integrate local tribal practices to deliver health information through youth-identified platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok.

LEVERAGE NATIVE YOUTH-FOCUSED RESOURCES

Leverage youth and Native youth focused resources that can support strategies in this Action Plan to promote well-being and provide youth with safe places to obtain information and engage with peers.

YOUTH RESOURCES

- [Home - We R Native](#)
- [OK2TALK](#)
- [Resources and Tools | Native Youth \(ihs.gov\)](#)
- [Adolescent Health | HHS Office of Population Affairs](#)

A Platform for Native Youth

Native youth and youth programs must be engaged in the process of elevating youth's mental well-being to empower youth to lead solutions for the challenges they face.

ENGAGE YOUTH, YOUTH PROGRAMS, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, SCHOOL SYSTEMS, AND YOUTH POLICY MAKERS

Engage youth in the development and delivery of health messaging around mental well-being. Strengthen youth advocacy efforts and call on stakeholders, partners, and institutions in their role of supporting youth health.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leverage social media platforms to engage youth in open conversations on mental well-being, strategies to promote well-being, and as a place to seek resources and information.

As the country begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic we are likely to see a residual impact on mental health and well-being as youth navigate the return to school, work, and in-person socializing. Lingering COVID-19 impacts can be addressed using youth-driven solutions outlined in this Action Plan and addressing youth health priorities.

#Nativeyouthpriorities #Action

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