

For Secretarial

EMRIP 2016

EMRIP July 2016: A.I. 5, Health and Indigenous Peoples,

with a Focus on Children and Youth

Tuesday, July 12, 2016; afternoon session

Thank you. Alcohol and substance misuse, mental health issues, and suicide continue to be among the most severe health and social problems that American Indians and Alaska Natives face. Behavioral health – mental and substance use disorders – also pose concerns for Native youth who have higher rates of suicide attempts and completions and early initiation of substance use in the United States. The rate of substance misuse and disorders among those aged 12 and up was higher among American Indians and Alaska Natives than among other groups.

The White House launched the Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative to improve the lives of Native youth through new investments and increased engagement of Native youth.

This initiative takes a comprehensive, culturally appropriate approach to ensure that all young Native people can reach their full potential. Among the strategic investments during fiscal year 2016 was a \$25,000,000 increase in the Tribal Behavioral Health Grant program administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

SAMHSA is the agency within the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that leads public health efforts to advance behavioral health in the United States. The Tribal Behavioral Health Grant program focuses on reducing substance abuse and suicide and promoting mental health among Native young persons. The increase in the grant program represents an investment of \$94,800,000 over a period of five years. These grants will provide new funding to nearly 90 tribal governments and organizations.

There are other complementary efforts for improving the wellness of Native American communities that are particularly relevant to Native youth. One such effort was based on a call from tribal leaders for improved coordination and collaboration on program and policies contributing to the health and well-being of American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In response to the call, SAMHSA, HHS's Indian Health Service, and the National Indian Health Board – an organization that represents tribal governments – have worked with tribal leaders to develop the first National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda (TBHA).

The TBHA is being developed with the input of tribal leaders. It is intended to serve as a guiding blueprint for strengthening policies and programs, aligning disparate resources, and facilitating collaborations – primarily between tribes and Federal agencies – to address behavioral health.

The TBHA includes a Native American Cultural Wisdom Declaration to incorporate the long-held wisdom and cultural practices of Tribal communities into efforts to improve behavioral health and related issues. A cross-cutting consideration throughout the TBHA's elements and priorities are actions focused not only on improving behavioral health for Native youth, but also overall wellness. Thank you for your attention.