

Grant for \$749,721 Aims to Improve Mental Health Services for Native American Children and Families

A Systems of Care Planning Grant for \$749,721 has been awarded to the Inter-Tribal Council (ITC) of Michigan, Inc. This week American Indian Health & Family Services of Southeast MI, Inc. (AIHFS) announced they, along with the University of Michigan's School of Social Work Family Assessment Clinic (FAC), have been selected to work with the ITC as collaborative subcontractors to help achieve the goals of the grant. The grant will be used to develop a System of Care, which will provide sustainable, culturally relevant mental health services for Native youth and their families.

Detroit, MI September 29, 2011 – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services administration has awarded a grant for \$749,721 to the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (ITC), who will work with American Indian Health and Family Services of Southeast, Michigan (AIHFS) and the University of Michigan's School of Social Work Family Assessment Clinic (FAC) to implement a System of Care Planning Grant. The grant will be used to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for a System of Care in Michigan to improve and expand services for Native families and their youth members (birth thru 21) who are “out of balance & challenged by spiritual unrest.”

Announcing their participation in the project this week, Jerilyn Church, Executive Director of AIHFS, said that, “Joining together the strengths of these three organizations will enable us to develop holistic solutions to the ongoing challenges of providing effective mental healthcare for Native children.” The planning process will include training to support trauma-informed interventions and assessments for service providers at AIHFS and for ITC's 11 member tribes via distance learning. The overall goal of the project is to expand the capacity of ITC and the AIHFS to enable implementation of a System of Care (SOC) to provide culturally and linguistically relevant mental health healing services for Native youth and their families.

The project consists of three main objectives: 1) To build collaborative partnerships at all levels to facilitate adoption of strengths-based, youth-driven, family and community guided SOC to improve mental health outcomes for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) youth in Michigan, 2) To train, build, and enhance statewide workforce to provide trauma-informed and culturally relevant services and supports for AI/AN youth and families served throughout Michigan, and 3) To develop the infrastructure for implementing a Wraparound Process built upon the foundation of traditional healing which values and supports AI/AN youth who are out of balance and challenged by spiritual unrest.

An estimated 4.5 to 6.3 million youth in the United States suffer from a serious mental health condition (about 10%) and 20% have a diagnosable mental disorder. Approximately 65% to 80% of these youth do not receive the specialty mental health services and supports they need. Accumulated research from the Children's Mental Health Initiative (CMHI) has shown that, when a SOC approach is implemented and

sustained, youth and families experience both short and long-term benefits, including: improvement in clinical and functional outcomes, significant reductions in suicide attempts by youth, improvement in school attendance and performance, reduction in contacts with law enforcement, and reduction of reliance on inpatient settings for care. Research has demonstrated that SOCs have a positive effect on the structure, organization, and availability of services for youth with serious mental health needs and their families. Jerilyn Church expressed the appreciation of the three receiving organizations, "We are very grateful to SAMHSA for their support and faith in our commitment to address the mental health needs of our Native Children."

AIHF is a non-profit agency dedicated to providing affordable comprehensive health care and enhancing the physical, emotional, cultural, environmental, and spiritual health of Native American families and other underserved populations in Southeast Michigan. They utilize the resources of their Healing Center by combining Western medical practice with traditional healing to encourage overall wellness among the entire community, from youth to elders.

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