ROCKY MOUNTAIN MIRECC FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

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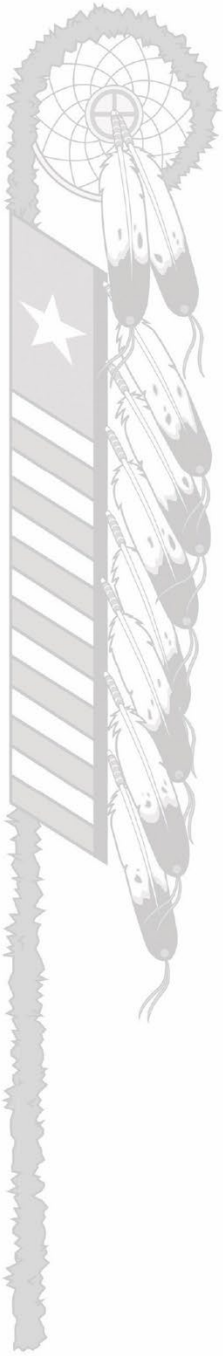

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PROVIDERS WORKING WITH NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS AT RISK FOR SUICIDE

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PROVIDERS WORKING WITH NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS* AT RISK FOR SUICIDE

From 2021-2022, the suicide rate for Native American or Alaska Native Veterans receiving Veterans Health Administration care rose 7.8% (VA Office of Suicide Prevention, 2025). The resources found in this document are intended to support the delivery of culturally responsive health care for Native American Veterans at risk for suicide. Specifically, these resources can help providers develop a better understanding of Native American Veterans' service, historical trauma, culture, resiliency, and health care needs.

This guide is organized into the following resource categories:

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*We recognize and honor Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders as Indigenous people of the United States, but this resource document focuses specifically on American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans.

Design elements created by Nakota Designs.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) American Indian and Alaska Native Culture Card

Covers regional differences, cultural customs, spirituality, communication styles, the role of Veterans and older adults, and health disparities.

Link: https://store.samhsa.gov/product/American-Indian-and-Alaska-Native-Culture-Card/SMA08-4354

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS

Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces

Provides background on the history and culture of Native American military service.

Link: https://americanindian.si.edu/why-we-serve/

VA Report on American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans

Provides comprehensive statistics regarding Native Veterans through an examination of demographic, socioeconomic, and health status statistics.

Link:
https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/AIAN.pdf

Native American Veterans VBA Page

Provides information on VA benefits and other programs for Native American Veterans.

Link: http://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-tribal.asp

Office of Tribal Government Relations (VA)

Provides information and resources related to the efforts of facilitating VA's Tribal Consultation Policy.

Link: https://department.va.gov/administrations-and-offices/tribal-government-relations/

Office of Tribal Health (VA)

Provides national leadership to promote health care equity for American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans through partnership and leveraging the Veterans Health Administration and Indian Health Service Memorandum of Understanding (VHA-IHS MOU).

Serves Native Veterans by connecting health care and culture through partnership, respect and understanding.

Link: https://www.va.gov/health/vha-tribal-health.asp

SAMHSA – TIP 61: Behavioral Health Services for American Indians and Alaska Natives

Provides behavioral health professionals with practical guidance about Native American history, historical trauma, and critical cultural perspectives in their work with American Indian and Alaska Native clients.

Discusses the demographics, social challenges, and behavioral health concerns of Native Americans. It highlights the importance of providers' cultural awareness, cultural competence, and culture-specific knowledge.

Provides information for administrators, program managers, and clinical supervisors to foster a culturally responsive environment for American Indian and Alaska Native clients. Specific topic areas include workforce development strategies, program and professional development considerations, and culturally responsive policies and procedures.

Link: https://store.samhsa.gov/product/tip-61-behavioral-health-services-american-indians-and-alaska-natives/sma18-5070

The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Inc. (NIWRC)

The NIWRC is a Native American-led nonprofit organization dedicated to ending violence against Native American women and children. NIWRC provides national leadership in ending gender-based violence in tribal communities by lifting the collective voices of grassroots advocates and offering culturally grounded resources, technical assistance and training, and policy development to strengthen tribal sovereignty.

Link: https://www.niwrc.org/

Indian Health Services Trainings

Offers courses related to cultural competency when serving American Indian and Alaska Natives, ethics, and trauma-informed care.

Link: https://www.ihs.gov/teleeducation

VA Talent Management System Trainings *(for VA employees only)*

Working with and for Native American Veterans (VA 131006708): Provides an overview of the history of and current concerns related to health and well-being of Native American Veterans seeking health care in Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

Being a Good Relative: Ethical Considerations for Working with and for Native American/Alaska Native Veterans (VA 131009304): Highlights promising and innovative practices focused on improving DEI efforts and provides information and resources to support the adoption of these practices within mental health programs.

Link: https://www.tms.va.gov/SecureAuth35

Traditional Healing Concepts and Psychiatry: Collaboration and Integration in Psychiatric Practice

Provides information on psychiatry collaborating with traditional healing and medicine.

Link: https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/traditional-healing-concepts-and-psychiatry-collaboration-and-integration-psychiatric-practice

SAMHSA Tribal Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Center Healing-informed Care Handout

Provides information on Indigenous healing-informed care, its cultural foundations, and the relationship to the Cultural Strategic Framework. This information can help providers gain a deeper understanding of cultural strengths that guide cultural resiliency.

Link: https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tribal-tta-healing-informed-care-handout.pdf

Native Voices Native Peoples' Concepts of Health and Illness: *Medicine Ways: Traditional Healers and Healing*

Provides stories and ideas about health and illness from the voices of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Link: https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/exhibition/healing-ways/index.html

Native American Traditional Healing: Information and Ways to Collaborate for Western Medicine and Mental Health Providers

Discusses traditional healing curative processes and stigma associated with these practices. The training also provides examples of how to build stronger collaborations between Western and Traditional Practitioners.

Link:
https://www.ihs.gov/sites/telebehavioral/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/slides/education/traditionalhealing.pdf

HISTORICAL TRAUMA HEALING

Indian Health Services On-Demand Training "Overview of Trauma Informed Care and Historical Trauma Informed Care"

Provides an overview of the core values of trauma-informed care and explores the similarities and differences of historical, complex and vicarious trauma. It also discusses the impact of trauma on physical and behavioral health.

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKNBtdP53ns&feature=youtu.be

What Does it Mean to Heal from Historical Trauma?

Reviews how to provide culturally relevant treatment to Native American clients.

Link: https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/what-does-it-mean-heal-historical-trauma/2021-06

Federal Indian Board School Initiative

Provides an overview of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative and links to hear survivor experiences and their stories of being in federal boarding schools.

Link: https://www.doi.gov/priorities/strengthening-indian-country/federal-indian-boarding-school-initiative

SAMHSA's Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda: The Historical and Current Contexts

This section of the Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda provides background on the historical and current contexts of tribal communities.

Link: https://www.samhsa.gov/tribal-affairs/national-tribal-behavioral-health-agenda/historical-current-contexts

NATIVE AMERICAN SUICIDE PREVENTION

VA Talent Management System Trainings *(for VA employees only)*

American Indian, Alaskan Native Suicide Risk Management Training for Monitory Veteran Program Coordinators (MVPCs) (VA 131010718): Contains 4 modules that cover an overview of American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans and Native American Veterans' mental health and suicide risk.

Link: https://www.tms.va.gov/SecureAuth35/

Suicide Risk Management Consultation Program (SRM) Lecture Series

Suicide Risk Management for Rural Native Veterans (February 2022): Presentation covers common mental health concerns among Rural Native Veterans and considerations for providing mental health care and suicide risk management services.

Grief, Loss, and Meaning in BIPOC Veterans: Exploring Historical Trauma and Suicide Risk Management (January 2023): Presentation discusses the impact of historical trauma on contemporary grief and loss recovery with a focus on BIPOC Veterans.

Cultural Considerations Applied in Community: Tribal VHA Partnerships in Suicide Prevention Toolkit (September 2024): Presentation provides guidance for interweaving VA's S.A.V.E. training with time-honored Tribal approaches for re-envisioning VA suicide prevention with Tribal communities.

Link: https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/consult/lecture-series.asp

StrongHearts Native Helpline

Culturally appropriate, anonymous, confidential, and free service dedicated to serving Native American and Alaska Native survivors, and concerned family members and friends affected by domestic, dating, and sexual violence. Connect with knowledgeable advocates who can provide lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable survivors to find safety and live lives free of abuse. StrongHearts Native Helpline is a project of the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center and the National Domestic Violence Hotline. **1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483)**.

Link: https://strongheartshelpline.org/

Native American Veteran Association

NAVA provides services to help in the transition to civilian life which include readjustment assistance, strengthening family ties, links to mental health and wellness services, and career and educational training.

Link: https://www.navavets.org/

Indian Health Service – Find Health Care

Find an Indian Health Service, Tribal, or Urban Indian Health Program facility.

Link: https://www.ihs.gov/findhealthcare

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