# Establishing a Research Agenda for American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Programs

*prepared for:*

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# Executive Summary

Since it began in 1965, Head Start has been the cornerstone of the nation's services for low-income children and their families. A substantial research base has been attached to Head Start, providing information about the program's overall accomplishments and directions about ways to improve services for young children. American Indian and Alaska Native (AI-AN) children, however, have not always been the direct beneficiaries of knowledge gained through research because very little evidence has been systematically gathered from Head Start programs that serve these children.

To support the development and implementation of research within and by tribal communities, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded ORC Macro a two-year contract to review existing information and explore research needs for American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs. The goal of the project was to develop a research agenda responsive to the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs—a research agenda that (1) takes into account the unique cultural environments and values of these populations and (2) guides the development of information programs can use to improve services provided to children and families.

To begin addressing the gaps in research, the ACF initiative established a consultant panel of experts in early childhood education for American Indians and Alaska Natives; synthesized findings from previous research studies; and conducted listening sessions with tribal leaders, elders, community representatives, parents, and staff from 18 American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs that represent a wide range of geographic location, size, program structure, use of the native language, and other factors. The project addressed the following questions:

- What are the research priorities and needs of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs?

- What issues should be considered in conducting research among American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs?

- How can ACF support partnerships between researchers and American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs?

- To what extent are culturally appropriate instruments, measures, and procedures available to assess child outcomes?

This report summarizes findings from the initiative, especially opinions and recommendations from listening session participants. The findings

will produce directions for developing scientifically valid information that can be used to address matters of consequence for American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs.

## GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR CHILDREN

To place in context recommendations for a research agenda, participants in listening sessions described the goals, aspirations, and hopes they hold for their children. Participants identified a lengthy list of positive outcomes in the areas of education, tribal identity, health, and personal development. Listening session participants want children to succeed in school and graduate from high school or post-secondary programs; they want children to learn the native language and honor the tribal culture; they want children to have good physical and emotional health; and they want children to become moral individuals. Participants said Head Start contributes to achieving these goals by providing children with school readiness skills, access to health services, and opportunities for family involvement and services.

Among parents, respect for diversity and a strong sense of personal responsibility are particularly important goals for their children, and they credit Head Start for making a major contribution to their children's development of basic academic and social skills. Head Start staff made similar comments, and they also discussed their interests in improving literacy and educational levels of Head Start parents; improving communication between themselves and parents, Head Start administrators, and tribal leaders; and finding better ways to track children's needs, progress, and outcomes.

## RESEARCH TOPICS AND METHODS

Listening session participants identified a variety of topics for future research that can provide useful information to benefit young AI-AN children. Parents, Head Start staff, and community and tribal leaders expressed interest in research on the long-term educational outcomes of AI-AN children (especially studies that examine outcomes comparing those who do and do not participate in Head Start), barriers to success in school after children leave Head Start, strategies for improving children's school readiness, and ways to recruit and retain highly skilled staff. Participants recommended conducting research on ways to promote children's native language skills and foster pride in their tribal identity and cultural traditions. They suggested additional research on valid, reliable, and culturally appropriate screening and

assessment methods. Other research topics of interest that participants identified include the emotional and physical well-being of AI-AN children; strategies for increasing parent involvement in children's social, emotional, and academic development; and the effects of adverse environmental factors, such as poverty, geographic isolation, and family structure, on AI-AN children's educational outcomes.

Parents are particularly interested in developing a research agenda that includes studies on fostering tribal identity and cultural knowledge, effective communication strategies between parents and teachers, and health outcomes of AI-AN children. Head Start staff share these interests with parents and add a range of other topics, including learning approaches of AI-AN children, staff access to educational and professional development opportunities, and an understanding of AI-AN family structure and dynamics that affect children's educational outcomes. Tribal and community leaders have a strong interest in research on the long-term educational outcomes of AI-AN children and also recommend research on effective communication strategies between the Head Start program and tribal government.

Many programs visited for this study had only limited experience with research. Even so, listening session participants developed thoughtful ideas about ways to conduct research in tribal communities. Parents, staff, and community leaders stressed the importance of transparency in conducting research, meaning that individuals in communities participating in studies should be fully consulted and informed about all aspects of the research design, implementation, and findings. They felt strongly that researchers must show respect and cultural sensitivity in carrying out and reporting research results, and they emphasized the importance of including American Indians and Alaska Natives on research teams.

## ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR AMERICAN INDIAN-ALASKA NATIVE HEAD START PROGRAMS

Based on the activities conducted for this project, several important themes emerge in regard to establishing a research agenda for AI-AN Head Start programs. These themes are likely to affect the design and conduct of research. They include the following:

■ the absence of a strong base of systematic studies and research about early childhood for American Indian and Alaska Native children;

- a deep interest from tribal communities in research that will benefit AI-AN children;

- the uniqueness of individual tribal communities and tribal sovereignty;

- the need for cultural appropriateness;

- attention to the long-term success of AI-AN children;

- the need to establish and follow appropriate dissemination mechanisms for sharing findings with AI-AN communities; and

- the need to develop a forum for discussion and information sharing to accompany federal efforts to sponsor research in tribal communities.

## Chapter I
## Background

Since it began in 1965, Head Start has been the cornerstone of the nation's services for low-income children and their families. Its basic principles have been models for other programs designed to improve the circumstances and opportunities that vulnerable populations face. Today, Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide comprehensive child development services for children between birth and age 5, pregnant women, and their families. Head Start has the overall goal of helping children from low-income families become ready to attend and succeed at school. Administered by the Head Start Bureau in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF),[1] funds are provided through grants to local public agencies, private organizations, Indian tribes, and school systems. These organizations, in turn, operate Head Start programs. They provide services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; nutrition; and parent involvement. An underlying premise of Head Start services is that they should be appropriate for the child's and family's developmental, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage and experience.

Children are eligible to enroll in Head Start if their families meet certain income guidelines. In fiscal year 2002, Head Start served over 900,000 children in nearly 19,000 centers at a cost per child of approximately $7,000. In addition to direct program services, the Head Start Bureau sponsors training and technical assistance activities; supports research, demonstration, and evaluation projects; and monitors programs for compliance and quality. In fiscal year 2002, total Head Start program costs came to about $6.5 billion (Head Start Program Fact Sheet, 2003).

### RESEARCH ON HEAD START

A substantial research enterprise has been attached to Head Start and other early childhood programs, providing information of significant value. Perhaps the most important finding, based on a comprehensive review of 36 studies, is that early childhood care and education:

> *. . . can produce large effects on IQ during the early childhood years and sizable persistent effects on achievement, grade retention, special education, high school graduation, and socialization . . . These effects are large enough and persistent enough to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children*

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[1] ACYF is an agency of the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

*from low-income families:  for many children, preschool
programs can mean the difference between failing and
passing, regular or special education, staying out of trouble
or becoming involved in crime and delinquency, dropping
out or graduating from high school (Barnett, 1995, p. 43).*

Research-based information has been used by Head Start to enhance
services and structures to better serve children and families according
to their abilities, needs, and development.  Recently, Head Start has
sponsored three large research initiatives:

1.  The Family and Child Experiences Study (FACES) is a national
    longitudinal study that describes the characteristics, experiences,
    and outcomes for children and families in Head Start.  Information
    was collected for a nationally representative sample of 40 Head
    Start programs and 3,200 children and parents, plus a second cohort
    of 43 programs and 2,800 children and parents, at their entry into
    Head Start, for one or two years of the children's participation in
    the program, and at the end of the kindergarten year.  The study
    is providing important information linking quality and outcomes
    for children in Head Start.  Findings show that Head Start children
    improve in terms of development and school readiness skills;
    children's writing and vocabulary skills improve significantly;
    most Head Start parents are involved with the program and are
    very satisfied with services their children receive; higher levels of
    teacher education are associated with higher levels of classroom
    quality; and higher quality Head Start classrooms are linked with
    greater educational progress for children (Zill et al., 2001).

2.  The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project measured a
    broad range of outcomes for children 0-3 years old, collecting
    extensive information about programs and individual families'
    experiences with them and conducting analyses to link program
    intervention with child and family outcomes.  The study included
    3,000 families living in 17 diverse communities; families were
    randomly assigned to Early Head Start or community-based
    "services-as-usual."  The research design had a dynamic and
    iterative evaluation process for continuous program improvement
    and an impact evaluation to identify outcomes for infants and
    toddlers in Early Head Start.  Findings from the evaluation show
    that children in Early Head Start, as compared to their peers not
    in the program, have greater cognitive development scores, score
    higher on measures of language development, and demonstrate
    more positive social-emotional development (Love et al., 2002).

3.  After an extensive planning process, the congressionally mandated Head Start Impact Study began data collection in Fall 2002.  The study will involve 5,000 to 6,000 three- and four-year-old children from a stratified national sample of grantees and delegate agencies; families will be randomly assigned to Head Start and control group conditions (the study will be confined to communities where the number of Head Start applicants exceeds the number of slots available).  This effort will study school readiness outcomes and collect information to understand the difference that Head Start makes for child development and learning and the conditions under which Head Start works best and for which children.

## AMERICAN INDIAN-ALASKA NATIVE HEAD START
## ESTABLISHING A RESEARCH AGENDA

*American Indian and Alaska Native children have not always been the direct beneficiaries of knowledge that has been gained through research.*

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI-AN) children have not always been the direct beneficiaries of knowledge that has been gained through research.  Very little evidence has been systematically gathered from Head Start programs that serve these children.  To date, understanding differences across and within AI-AN populations has remained largely outside the body of knowledge derived from systematic, large-scale research on early childhood development.  To the extent that studies have been conducted, they often are ethnographic or case studies, which, although rich with detail and understanding, may be limited in their generalizability and are not necessarily the best method for producing knowledge that can be turned into strategies to better serve American Indian and Alaska Native children.

American Indian and Alaska Native children bring aspects of their unique culture and background into Head Start, which may affect their approaches to learning, development of language skills, behavioral characteristics, and health in ways that are different from other racial and ethnic groups.  Moreover, American Indian and Alaska Native children differ from each other across tribal and ancestral affiliations and across the cultural norms that affect their families and the types of environments in which they live.[2]  Thus, research must

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[2]One particular challenge in describing and assessing early childhood education for American Indian and Alaska Native populations is to recognize their uniqueness while avoiding any overgeneralization about their distinctiveness; if this challenge is not met, the analyst risks stereotyping, with attendant adverse consequences.

take into account the unique cultural characteristics of children and families and the goals and values of the local communities in which they live.

National research and evaluation activities of Head Start typically exclude tribal programs from the population eligible for inclusion in the samples, in part because of methodological issues raised by the unique circumstances of tribal programs,[3] and in part because legislative mandates have specifically excluded tribal programs from certain national Head Start research and evaluation activities (for example, Sec. 649, Head Start Authorization Act, October 27, 1998). At the same time, legislative provisions require the study of Head Start programs for American Indian and Alaska Native children. To meet this requirement, it is necessary to examine American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs in ways distinct from other national research and evaluation studies of Head Start programs. Cultural issues must be addressed in developing research questions, method-ologies, sampling procedures, and data collection instruments. Differences among American Indian and Alaska Native groups must be acknowledged and respected in developing the methodology and conducting the research. Most important, tribal communities must have a significant voice in designing and conducting the research.

To support the development and implementation of research within and by tribal communities, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded ORC Macro a two-year contract to review existing information and explore research needs for American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs. The goal of the project was to develop a research agenda responsive to the needs of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs—a research agenda that (1) takes into account the unique cultural environments and values of these populations and (2) provides information programs can use to improve services provided to children and families.

To begin addressing the gaps in research, the ACF initiative synthesized research findings; conducted listening sessions with tribal leaders, elders, parents, and staff from American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs; and consulted with experts in early childhood

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[3]Although a majority of United States residents who identify themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native reside in urban areas (Forquera, 2001), the vast majority of AI-AN Head Start programs are located in more rural, reservation-based settings.

education for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The project addressed the following questions:

- What are the research priorities and needs of American Indian and Alaska Native programs?

- What issues should be considered in conducting research in American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs?

- How can ACF support partnerships between researchers and American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs?

- To what extent are culturally appropriate instruments, measures, and procedures available to assess child outcomes?

Findings from the initiative will produce directions for developing scientifically valid information that can be used to address matters of consequence for American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start programs, particularly with regard to identifying effective procedures and practices for enhancing child development and promoting school readiness.

## MAJOR PROJECT ACTIVITIES

ACF identified several tasks to be accomplished in the project: synthesize the extant research literature, establish a consultant panel, gather information from AI-AN Head Start program participants, and produce a final report. The work conducted for these tasks is summarized below.

### Research Synthesis

To provide background and understanding about the knowledge base regarding services for young American Indian and Alaska Native children, a research synthesis was prepared and published (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Given the project's emphasis on outcomes for children and Head Start's commitment to helping young children become ready to attend school, the synthesis focuses on educational and health services and topical areas related to those services. Relevant studies, articles, reports, theses and dissertations, unpublished documents, and other materials were identified and collected. The task involved more than a standard literature review because documents needed for the project included both published and unpublished literature.

The synthesis summarizes information contained in the materials identified. It is organized around major topics that reflect the emphases of both this project and extant knowledge, with information about culturally appropriate curricula and practices, language acquisition, teacher training, parent involvement, assessment tools and practices, health and physical well-being, and mental health.[4] Major conclusions drawn in the synthesis include the following:

- In its current state, the literature on services for young AI-AN children relies heavily on qualitative methods, including personal histories, case studies, descriptive analyses, and ethnographic approaches. There are, however, several studies that use systematic measures and tools, suggesting that some researchers and AI-AN communities have found it suitable to use other forms of social science or education research practices, such as evaluations and standardized assessments.

- Sample sizes tend to be small. Most studies on learning styles, culturally appropriate curricula and practices, language acquisition, and assessment tools have relatively few study participants, ranging from as few as six to as many as a few dozen.

- An exception to small sample sizes is found in health-related material regarding American Indian and Alaska Native populations, where several studies have used large extant databases or retrospective record reviews.

- Most research studies identified for the synthesis use convenience or purposive samples. Very few have any sort of control or comparison group.

- Studies that focus on reservation-based American Indian populations tend to be tribe specific; that is, most do not involve comparative studies across different tribal populations. Studies that are more general for the AI-AN population tend to draw on urban Indians and do not generally segment findings according to tribal affiliation.

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[4]The synthesis centers on the research literature and provides lessons from non-research publications as well. Within each topic addressed, information in the synthesis is organized into two segments: the first segment summarizes issues and observations from position papers, opinions, experiences, and syntheses; the second segment presents, in the style of an annotated bibliography, information from research studies.

- Several studies have used standardized assessment instruments among AI-AN children, but the wide range of tools used suggests that there is not a consensus among researchers regarding the most reliable and valid instruments.

## Consultant Panel

To provide advice about the direction and content of the project, ACF established a consultant panel.[5]  Members were asked to:

- help establish the primary questions to address in the project;

- review, comment on, and make suggestions about the draft research synthesis;

- provide guidance on types of places or particular locations that should be visited;

- review experiences from two pilot site visits and help formulate discussion topics for conducting listening sessions; and

- advise the Head Start Bureau and the Administration for Children and Families regarding research issues and methods for future studies.

*Panel members felt strongly that sites included in this project should have diverse characteristics.*

The panel convened for a two-day meeting in April 2002.  Members made many suggestions that were incorporated in the project.  Three areas received special attention:  types of programs to be visited, the protocol to be followed in interacting with tribes and tribal programs, and questions to be posed during site visits.

Panel members felt strongly that sites included in this project should have diverse characteristics.  They recommended including Head Start programs of various sizes (small, medium, and large) and various geographic locations (in or near a city or town, somewhat removed from a sizable community, and isolated).  They suggested selecting Head Start programs that are close to colleges and universities, especially tribal colleges and universities, plus those that have no nearby postsecondary institutions.  Members said it was important to include programs with relatively high turnover rates and programs with relatively stable staff rosters, and programs that had extensive native language and cultural components along with those that did not.

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[5]Members of the consultant panel are listed in the acknowledgments of this report.

Members emphasized the importance of learning about and following tribal protocol.  They said proper, thoughtful procedures should be undertaken in making the initial contact with each site selected for a visit, extending the invitation to participate, gaining approval to visit, scheduling the visit, and conducting the visit.

After reviewing results from the two pilot tests conducted before the panel met, members strongly encouraged ACF to conduct open-ended, free-flowing discussions that center on questions of importance to tribal communities.  Panel members identified the kinds of topics that would serve the dual purpose of providing information to fulfill ACF's needs and reflecting tribal priorities.

## Listening Sessions

In response to experiences in the pilot sites and on recommendation of the consultant panel, ACF and ORC Macro devised an approach for conducting listening sessions in tribal communities.  The purpose of the listening sessions was to obtain the perspective of tribal leaders, elders, community leaders, parents, and Head Start staff in response to three overall objectives, namely determining:

1.  What do tribal leaders, elders, community leaders, parents, and Head Start staff want for children in their community?

2.  What values affecting children and their development are important among members of the tribal community?

3.  What research is needed to help children achieve the outcomes the tribal community values, and how can ACF best support this research?

These three overarching objectives were framed within the Head Start context, meaning that the listening sessions focused on ways that Head Start can (or should) help children achieve outcomes important to the tribal community.

To begin the process of conducting visits and listening sessions, the Head Start Bureau sent a letter in June 2002 to the tribal chairs of all selected programs, with a copy to the Head Start director.  The letter provided basic information about the project and invited the grantee to participate.  The ORC Macro project director then contacted each Head Start director and asked for advice on the procedures to follow in terms of getting permission from the tribal leadership to visit and for steps to follow to schedule the visit.  In some communities, the

tribal leader and Head Start director's concurrence was sufficient; in other places, a tribal resolution was passed or the request was reviewed by an Institutional Review Board.[6]

Staff selected to conduct listening sessions participated in a 1½ day training session that focused on the procedures to be followed. All visits were conducted by a two-member team, at least one of whom is an American Indian or Alaska Native individual. Before a visit, team members reviewed written information and program data to learn about the community's context and the Head Start program. During visits, separate listening sessions were held with each type of respondent whenever possible. Most listening sessions had six to ten individuals, but on several occasions as many as 30 to 40 people came for the discussion. Typically, a listening session lasted for 1½ to 2 hours.

*Through the listening sessions and discussions with Head Start directors, more than 700 individuals participated in the study.*

Throughout, site visitors made consistent, conscientious efforts to respect the local community, culture, and individuals. These efforts took various forms, such as conducting listening sessions at times convenient for participants (for example, meeting with parents during evening hours), providing food and beverages for listening session participants, understanding the vital role of elders and tribal leaders, making sure that listening session participants fully comprehended the purpose of their involvement and the use that would be made of information they provided, demonstrating awareness of and respect for tribal sovereignty, asking questions and hearing answers in a non-judgmental fashion, and ensuring that all listening session participants had opportunities to voice their experiences, opinions, and recommendations.

Through the listening sessions and discussions, more than 700 individuals participated in the project. Information gathered from the listening sessions was entered onto a site reporting document, which constitutes the database for this project. Information from each tribal community was summarized in a report, which was sent to that community's tribal leader and Head Start director for review and comment.

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[6]Of all invitations extended, four sites declined to participate. Two had federal monitoring reviews scheduled, which entail a lot of time to prepare for and sometimes cause anxiety among staff and parents. A third site was experiencing instability in the Head Start director's position, with three individuals filling that role during a six-month period. The fourth had recently been awarded several grants for special projects, and staff were heavily involved in getting those projects planned and operational. For these four sites, replacement programs were identified that shared similar characteristics.

## The Report

This document is the final report from the ACF initiative. It provides information from all aspects of the project and has a special emphasis on reporting information gained through listening sessions. Because we guaranteed that all information provided in listening sessions would be treated confidentially and that all sites and programs visited for this project would remain anonymous, sites are not named and any potentially identifying characteristics are masked.

It is important to note that the open-ended, discussion-oriented method used to gather information during listening sessions produced a wealth of information, but the content of information provided here depends on the individuals present and the comments they made. Participants in one listening session may have strongly expressed a particular goal for their children while participants in another listening session did not. In this and similar situations, the absence of an expressed opinion from the second group does not mean the particular goal is unimportant to them. Instead, it may simply mean that participants did not raise the point during the listening session.

The report is organized as follows. Chapter II provides general information about AI-AN Head Start programs and a description of sites visited for the project. Chapter III contains information gathered during listening sessions regarding participants' goals and aspirations for children, along with their observations about ways that Head Start helps achieve those goals and aspirations. Chapter IV presents listening session participants' recommendations for research regarding AI-AN Head Start, and Chapter V discusses methods for conducting research among American Indian-Alaska Native programs and summarizes the project's findings. The Appendix contains supplementary exhibits that expand on information in the text.

# Chapter II

# American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start Programs

To serve American Indian and Alaska Native children, the Head Start Bureau created Region XI, which at the time of this project provided funding to 153 tribal grantees in 27 states. Region XI programs often differ from other Head Start programs in that they tend to be located in rural, remote locations, as shown in Exhibit 1. Programs in these areas are often affected by challenges associated with their geographic location, such as limited transportation, limited resources (e.g., the pool of qualified teachers may be small), and relatively small numbers of children to enroll in preschool.

**Exhibit 1**
**Locations of Region XI Head Start Programs**
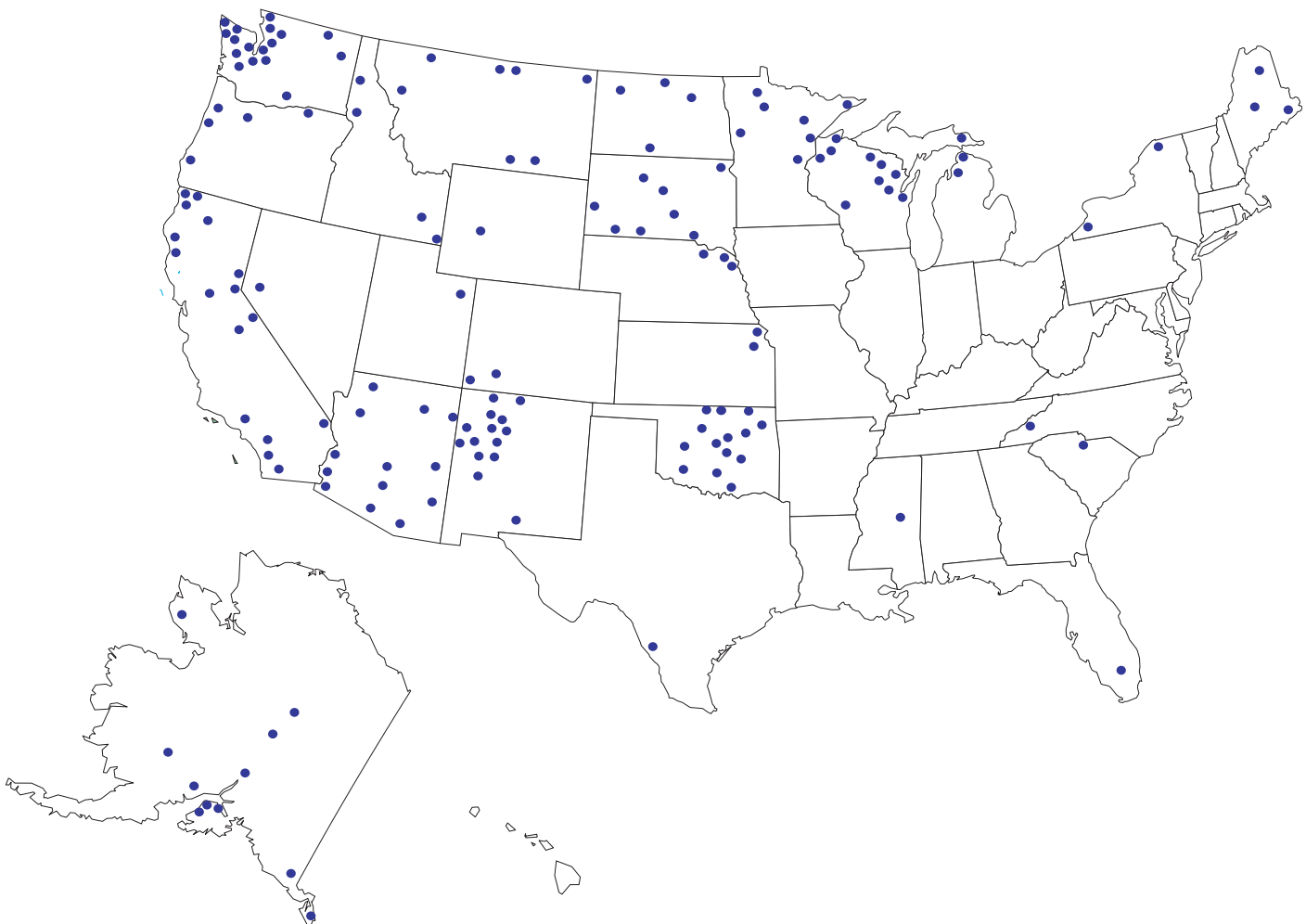
In this chapter, the first section provides information about all AI-AN Head Start programs based on reports programs have submitted to the Head Start Bureau.  The second section describes the programs visited for this project.

## HEAD START FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN[7]

The Head Start Bureau reports that Region XI grantees serve more than 25,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children.  According to reports submitted for the 2001-2002 program year, almost 20,000 AI-AN children were enrolled in Region XI Head Start programs and more than 11,000 AI-AN children were enrolled in other Head Start programs.  Fully 88 percent of the children enrolled in AI-AN programs are American Indian or Alaska Native (Exhibit 2).[8]

| Exhibit 2 Race and Ethnicity of Children Enrolled in Region XI Head Start, Program Year 2001-2002 | | |
|---|---|---|
| race/ethnicity | number | percent |
| American Indian-Alaska Native | 19,966 | 87.9 |
| Asian | 45 | 0.2 |
| Black/African American | 140 | 0.6 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 456 | 2.0 |
| Caucasian | 1,689 | 7.4 |
| biracial/multiracial | 348 | 1.5 |
| other/unspecified | 68 | 0.3 |
| TOTAL | 22,712 | 100.0 |

According to data from the 2001-2002 program year, AI-AN Head Start serves proportionately fewer children in programs that operate all day, five days per week, and proportionately more children in programs that operate part-day, four days per week (Exhibit 3).  The average Region XI class has 16.4 students and a teacher-to-child ratio of 1 to 7.3.

[7]All information provided in this section comes from the 2001-2002 Program Information Reports (PIRs), which grantees submit annually.  The PIR database shows that 137 of the 153 AI-AN Head Start programs (which excludes AI-AN Early Head Start programs) submitted PIRs.

[8]Discrepancies in enrollment figures between Head Start Bureau reports and Exhibit 2 are attributable to the absence of PIR data from grantees that did not submit reports.

| Exhibit 3 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Region XI Program Structure** | | |
| program operations | enrollment | percent |
| full day, 5 days per week | 4,745 | 21.8 |
| part day, 5 days per week | 2,970 | 13.7 |
| full day, 4 days per week | 2,158 | 9.9 |
| part day, 4 days per week | 9,792 | 45.0 |
| home based | 1,558 | 7.2 |
| combination program | 419 | 1.9 |
| family child care | 30 | 0.1 |
| locally designed program | 68 | 0.3 |

Among Region XI classroom teachers, nearly half hold Child Development Associate (CDA) certificates, 19 percent have associate's degrees, and 7 percent have bachelor's degrees (Exhibit 4). Annual salaries are about $20,000 for teachers with a CDA or an associate's degree and about $23,500 for teachers with bachelor's degrees. The annual turnover rate among staff is about 20 percent, the program director has held his or her position for an average of five years, and about half of all teachers are current or former Head Start parents.

| Exhibit 4 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Characteristics of Region XI Head Start Staff** | | |
| education level: teachers | number | percent |
| classroom teachers with CDA or state equivalent | 671 | 49.2 |
| classroom teachers with associate's degree | 255 | 18.7 |
| classroom teachers with bachelor's degree | 98 | 7.2 |
| classroom teachers with graduate degree | 13 | 1.0 |
| classroom teachers with no related degree or CDA | 327 | 24.0 |
| education level: assistant teachers | | |
| assistant teachers with CDA or state equivalent | 209 | 13.8 |
| assistant teachers with associate's degree | 69 | 4.6 |
| assistant teachers with bachelor's degree | 4 | 0.3 |
| assistant teachers with graduate degree | 1 | 0.1 |
| assistant teachers with no related degree or CDEA | 1,228 | 81.3 |
| staff salaries | | |
| teacher average salary (CDA only) | | $19,255.42 |
| teacher average salary (associate's degree) | | $20,644.18 |
| teacher average salary (bachelor's degree) | | $23,438.29 |
| teacher average salary (graduate degree) | | $26,343.40 |
| other indicators | | |
| turnover rate (percent) | | 22.8 |
| average # of years program director in position | | 5.3 |
| percent of staff who are current or former Head Start parents | | 53.0 |

The state of enrolled children's health provides indicators of the population AI-AN programs serve (Exhibit 5). Over 80 percent of all children enrolled in Region XI programs completed all necessary medical screenings, 72 percent have a regular source of medical care, and 24 percent do not have medical insurance. About 70 percent had a dental exam and have a regular source for dental care. In terms of mental health indicators, 82 percent were screened for developmental, sensory, or behavioral concerns, and 13 percent were identified as needing follow-up.

| Exhibit 5 Health Status of Children in Region XI Head Start Programs | | |
|---|---|---|
| medical care | number | percent |
| children who completed all medical screenings | 18,376 | 81.1 |
| children diagnosed as needing treatment | 5,951 | 26.3 |
| children who received or are receiving treatment | 4,817 | 80.9 |
| children with a source of continuous accessible medical care | 16,369 | 72.3 |
| dental care | | |
| children who received dental examination | 16,057 | 70.9 |
| children who received preventive care | 11,369 | 50.2 |
| children diagnosed as needing treatment | 8,032 | 35.5 |
| children who received or are receiving treatment | 5,981 | 74.5 |
| children with a source of continuous accessible dental care | 16,177 | 71.2 |
| mental health | | |
| children who completed screenings | 17,890 | 82.3 |
| children identified as needing follow-up assessments or formal evaluations | 2,372 | 13.3 |
| other indicators | | |
| children diagnosed with a disability | 2,807 | 12.5 |
| children without health insurance | 5,514 | 24.3 |

## American Indian-Alaska Native Programs Included in this Project

Region XI Head Start programs have both common and diverse characteristics. The most evident shared characteristic is their location in remote areas. They vary on many other indicators, such as:

- geographic distribution—AI-AN programs are found in all geographic areas of the United States;

- size—they range from very large to very small enrollments, with staff rosters of corresponding size;

- service offerings—some have Early Head Start, others do not;

- proximity to tribal colleges and universities—some have these postsecondary educational institutions nearby, and others do not;

- staff qualifications—some AI-AN programs have proportionately more teachers with associate's or bachelor's degrees; and

- use of the native language—some have substantially incorporated the native language into Head Start instruction and programs.

As discussed previously, the consultant panel providing guidance on this project suggested that AI-AN programs of diverse characteristics should be invited to participate in this project. Accordingly, we chose grantees that reflect the diversity of Region XI programs. As shown in Exhibit 6, programs visited for this study fall in all geographic regions, range from small to large, include some with Early Head Start and some that have tribal colleges and universities nearby, have staff with a range of credentials, and vary in their use of the native language. We emphasize that these programs were not chosen to be demo-graphically, statistically, or otherwise representative of Region XI programs, but they do contain a wide array of features that characterize the diversity of AI-AN programs.

The range of programs in the project is extraordinary and reflects the wide variety of program types found in Region XI. Some Head Start centers are located in fairly sizable towns and others can require traveling on a dirt road for 14 miles to reach the facility. In some programs, tribal members hold all staff positions—program director, teacher, aide, bus driver, and cook—and in others, staff represent an amazing diversity of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Some teachers described the challenges of juggling family and personal responsibilities in order to attend postsecondary classes held at a Head Start center where the program brings professors to the teachers; and other staff talked about fulfilling their dreams to earn a certificate or college degree by paying their own tuition and driving 100 miles twice a week to attend school. Parents told their stories, beginning as shy volunteers in the classroom when their children would not let them leave, and then becoming so involved with Head Start that they even-tually were elected to tribal leadership positions. Tribal leaders spoke passionately of the need to preserve their language and culture and identified threats to both, often as a result of the need to interact effectively with the dominant society, both socially and economically.

In every program we visited, tribal leaders, Head Start staff, community representatives, and parents commented on the need to recognize the hardships and unique challenges their programs face. The hardships

**Exhibit 6**
**Characteristics of Head Start Programs Visited for the Project**

| program | geographic location | remoteness[a] | program size[b] | close to tribal college or university (TCU) | Head Start-TCU partnership | early Head Start | half- or full-day program | operates during school year or full year | home- or center-based program | turnover rate[c] (in %) | % teachers with degree | % teachers with CDA | native language instruction in program[d] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | southeast | metro | M | no | no | no | half | full | center | 18 | 0 | 100 | yes |
| 2 | midwest | midsize | VL | no | no | yes | full | school | center | 8 | 42 | 58 | yes |
| 3 | west | remote | VS | no | no | no | half | school | center | -- | -- | -- | no |
| 4 | southwest | remote | L | no | no | no | half | school | center | 0 | 20 | 80 | n/a |
| 5 | midwest | metro | M | no | no | no | both | both | center | 13 | 0 | 100 | yes |
| 6 | west | remote | S | no | no | no | half | school | center | -- | -- | -- | yes |
| 7 | west | midsize | M | no | no | yes | both | full | both | 0 | 60 | 40 | yes |
| 8 | west | remote | S | no | no | yes | both | full | center | 25 | 0 | 67 | no |
| 9 | west | metro | L | no | no | no | half | school | center | 18 | 38 | 53 | no |
| 10 | midwest | midsize | L | yes | yes | no | full | school | center | 20 | 50 | 17 | yes |
| 11 | midwest | remote | L | yes | yes | yes | full | school | center | 2 | 4 | 67 | yes |
| 12 | southwest | remote | VL | yes | no | yes | half | school | both | 10 | 17 | 17 | yes |
| 13 | west | small | M | no | no | yes | half | school | both | 17 | 18 | 35 | yes |
| 14 | west | midsize | VS | yes | yes | no | half | school | center | 14 | 0 | 100 | n/a |
| 15 | northeast | remote | VS | no | no | no | half | full | center | 0 | 0 | 100 | yes |
| 16 | southwest | metro | S | yes | yes | no | half | full | center | 26 | 0 | 40 | yes |
| 17 | west | remote | VS | no | no | no | half | school | center | -- | -- | -- | no |
| 18 | midwest | midsize | S | yes | no | no | full | school | center | 24 | 50 | 50 | yes |

Sources: Data on program size, Early Head Start, program operations, and staff are from PIRs; information on location and remoteness is from Census 2000 data; information on native language instruction is from Head Start directors or education coordinators.

[a] "Remoteness" is defined as follows: remote = isolated location, small = in or near small town, midsize = in or near midsize town, and metro = in or near metropolitan area.

[b] "Program size" is the number of students and is defined as follows: VS = very small (< 50), S = small (51-100), M = medium (101-200), L = large (201-500), and VL = very large (> 500).

[c] Programs 3, 6, and 17 do not have site-specific data available regarding teacher turnover rate or education levels. Together, the three programs have a turnover rate of 23 percent, 0 percent of teachers have a college degree, and 50 percent of the teachers have a CDA.

and challenges are attributed to a host of factors, including the deep and lasting effects of historical trauma, racism, and poverty and the more immediate effects of isolation, unemployment, unresponsive educational systems, and inadequate services for family and health needs.

The following sections highlight some key characteristics of programs visited for this project.

## Head Start Facilities

In every program visited, listening session participants commented on the quality of the available Head Start facilities.  Lack of space is a problem for many AI-AN Head Start programs, with staff, tribal leaders, and parents from 14 of the 18 programs visited describing the challenges of serving children in small buildings with too few classrooms.  At two sites, Head Start staff must regularly dismantle their classrooms to make room for tribal activities and meetings.  One Head Start center must hold two daily sessions to accommodate its current enrollment. Staff at one program's center use partitions to create extra classrooms in a gymnasium, and the noise level makes it hard for them to teach. Listening session participants from three sites want to construct larger, centralized Head Start centers to replace multiple scattered sites, believing that would increase efficiency and permit better coordination of services for children and families.

*Tribal leaders, Head Start staff, community representatives, and parents commented on the need to recognize the hardships and unique challenges their programs face.*

Tribal leaders, staff, and parents from most visited programs identified the poor physical condition of Head Start facilities as a serious issue. Participants from three programs mentioned inadequate bathroom facilities; in fact, staff and children at one of these centers share a single bathroom.  Participants at several sites cited environmental and health concerns, such as mold, lead, sewage leakage, asbestos, and inadequate water treatment, and two programs have buildings that are not up to code.  Along with the facilities themselves, participants from several programs described the poor quality or lack of basic equipment, such as copiers, fax machines, telephones, and kitchen and playground equipment.

Despite ongoing challenges with the size and physical condition of facilities, about half of the programs have improved or made plans to improve their physical infrastructures.  Four are planning to construct new Head Start or combined child care/Head Start centers within the next couple of years, and six have recently expanded or improved existing buildings; added kitchen facilities, playgrounds, storage space, and learning centers; brought buildings up to code; or improved access for children with physical disabilities.

## Language and Culture

Although nearly all the Head Start programs visited have integrated some indigenous language and culture into their programs, the degree of integration varies widely across the sites (Exhibit 7). In some, the integration of culture was at a most basic level, usually involving native dancing and singing, although it can also include crafts such as basket weaving, making regalia, drumming, and annual cultural events, such as powwows and special days for celebrating native culture. The different cultural activities usually reflected the traditional practices of the tribe being served (e.g., children in one program take field trips to go ice fishing and tap maple trees for syrup). Programs serving children from more than one tribe often had problems integrating native culture and language into their services. For example, in one program that had more than 10 cultures represented, teachers were concerned about teaching one set of traditions because children from another might feel left out.

Staff in most Head Start programs we visited tended to reflect the community they served. While usually this meant a large percentage of staff (especially teachers and aides) were native, in some cases, staff were more diverse. For example, most staff in one program are native, but there are also a number of African American and Hispanic staff members, and many children in the program are of these backgrounds or of mixed heritage.

Similar variation occurs in the extent of native language instruction, with most programs attempting at least some form of such instruction. Some Head Start programs have a thriving language curriculum. The two largest programs visited for this study report offering immersion and bilingual instruction[9] for students. Those that did not offer much language instruction cited either a lack of available native speakers, as one site where the native language is virtually lost, or a lack of funds to hire language instructors. Most programs teach students the basics of the native language, such as letter pronunciation and words for animals and colors.

Programs that serve multiple tribes face a common challenge for native language instruction, finding it difficult to accommodate all the various

*Programs that serve multiple tribes face a common challenge for native language instruction.*

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[9]We need to caution that the programs described as bilingual or immersion may not fit commonly held concepts of such programs. In several of these classrooms, we observed that English was the dominant (or sole) language used in both materials and oral communication. It is possible that English was used because outside visitors were present.

languages and cultures represented.  In one program with Head Start children from several tribes, staff attempt to teach several native languages, but it has become increasingly difficult to do so because many fluent speakers are aging and retiring.

Very few programs had many books or other written materials in a native language.  In some cases, this was because several sites visited

| Exhibit 7 | |
|---|---|
| Native Language and Culture in Head Start Programs | |
| program | Head Start services |
| 1 | A cultural specialist leads activities such as dancing, lanuguage acquisition, and music. |
| 2 | Offers emersion and immersion language classes. |
| 3 | No native language instruction offered; no specific cultural traditions incorporated into curriculum. |
| 4 | Some language is taught; teachers know just enough to teach children certain words; very few native speakers are available. |
| 5 | A large majority of staff are native; program incorporates tribal traditions. |
| 6 | Letters and some words are taught in native language; cultural projects include dancing, drumming, and singing. |
| 7 | Most staff (13 of 21) are native; children are taught songs and dance, but so many tribes with different languages are served that it is hard to integrate language instruction into Head Start. |
| 8 | Staff encourage use of native language, but there is some tension because two tribes have different languages; some words (animals and colors) are taught; staff are making their own books. |
| 9 | Drumming and dance are taught, along with the alphabet and basic words. |
| 10 | Program has no language instruction, due to absence of fiscal resources. |
| 11 | Vast majority of staff are native; they teach language through immersion and bilingual programs; place a strong emphasis on culture. |
| 12 | Some language and vocabulary are taught by native-speaking staff. |
| 13 | Children put on a powwow, learn dancing and singing, make outfits; many children of biracial or multiracial backgrounds, so program has multicultural emphasis; teachers make own culturally relevant books. |
| 14 | Cultural element incorporated into curriculum weekly; native language is not taught because its use among tribal members has diminished to virtually nothing. |
| 15 | Some language and vocabulary are taught by native-speaking staff. |
| 16 | All teachers and aides are native; language is used a lot in daily activities. |
| 17 | In a diverse community, program faces challenges; classrooms have some cultural decorations. |
| 18 | Language is integrated into all aspects of curriculum; staff try to teach 350 native words during Head Start; staff are learning from elders and co-workers; local college translated a children's book into native language for Head Start. |

Source:  Information provided by Head Start directors and staff in the programs visited.

have an oral tradition, and several do not have a written language. Two exceptions were noted: one program had worked with a tribal college to translate a children's book into the language, and teachers in another program had made their own books in the native language.

## Head Start Curricula

The curricula at Head Start programs visited for this project fit into four major categories: they are based on the Creative Curriculum in nine programs, based on the High Reach Curriculum in two programs, Head Start teacher-developed in three programs, and administrator-developed in four programs. Most programs have been using the current curriculum for two to five years. Curricula in the 18 programs varied widely in level of formality. For example, teachers in one program develop curricula on a day-to-day basis, while another uses High Reach, to which they have added a strong native cultural component based on input from parents, tribal elders, and the general tribal community.

*Almost all programs had integrated some form of native culture or linguistic education into their curricula.*

Almost all programs had integrated some form of native culture or linguistic education into their curricula. One that had not said doing so would be difficult because of its diverse student population, which includes many Hispanic students. Even without formal native language integration into the curriculum, some of this program's staff teach children basic native words for animals and aspects of nature, especially in one classroom with a high proportion of native students.

## Screening and Assessment[10]

Head Start requires that all children undergo health and developmental screening within 45 days of entering the program. Sites visited for this project have fairly regular screening processes in place, and all programs screen students for developmental, sensory, and behavioral concerns as required. Although a variety of tools, instruments, and methods were used for this process, two particular tools were used often: the Brigance and some version of the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL) tool (see Exhibit A-2 in the Appendix). No program used any one tool or method exclusively; all used some form of observation, usually by program staff, to assist in

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[10]As part of this project, ORC Macro collected information about the screening and assessment processes used in all Region XI Head Start programs. A summary of the information is presented in Exhibit A-1 in the Appendix.

the screening process.  Some programs mentioned challenges in this area, especially when the formal assessment was done by an outside person or agency, who do not know the children well.  When this happens, staff said one of two problems could arise:  the outsider might not spot a known behavioral problem, or the outsider might detect a behavior and label it as a problem when staff believe that, in fact, it is not.

In the screening process, cultural issues raise other challenges, particularly related to methodology.  Staff in one program felt that the DIAL was too heavily weighted toward an auditory question-and-answer method to administer the screening.  They said this is a challenge because their culture may be less verbal, and they suggested using a more functional or hands-on screening process.  Others said that many children respond to questions in the native language, and their correct answers may not, in fact, be credited as such.

Methods of measuring children's progress through Head Start also raise challenges for the programs.  Around the time of our visits, this issue was receiving quite a bit of assistance and attention from the Head Start Bureau.  All programs reported using some form of assessment to inform parents about their children's accomplishments.

Assessment methods vary widely among the 18 programs visited (see Exhibit A-2).  At one end of the spectrum, a paper file is kept on each student.  The files contain examples of work and observational anec-dotes from teachers, but no formal assessment or tracking is done.  At the other end of the spectrum are programs such as one that uses the Developmental Continuum (from the Creative Curriculum), which includes an assessment module and software database, plus a locally developed database containing information such as screening data, services received, and important assessment dates.  Most programs fell somewhere in between these two.

Several programs are in transition, moving assessment and tracking data from paper files to an electronic system, the most popular being Child Plus.  This transition has led to challenges for many programs.  Staff in a few locations identified difficulties in having to do everything twice (record on paper, then input into the computer); staff at one site stated they encountered technical problems in the transfer to an electronic system and cannot afford to purchase technical assistance.

Among programs not using a formal assessment tool, many reported they could not find a culturally appropriate tool.  Participants at one

large site noted that standardized tests often do not take into account the inherent differences between communities. Some staff at other sites expressed concerns that standardized assessment tools can be biased. One teacher gave the example of a test where the child was asked to identify a picture of a croissant. A native child may recognize the picture as a bread product and call it "fry bread," naming the form of bread the child is familiar with. In this case, the response would be marked as incorrect, and the child would not be given any credit for associating the picture with the appropriate type of food.

## SUMMARY

This chapter has described some key characteristics of American Indian-Alaska Native programs that were visited for this project. With guidance from our consultant panel, we attempted to select programs that would capture the diversity of tribal programs. Listening sessions were conducted at AI-AN Head Start programs in various geographic regions, that range in size from very small to very large, have a variety of programmatic features (such as Early Head Start, length and duration of classes, curricula, and screening and assessment procedures), and vary in terms of staff characteristics. Although the programs share some common characteristics, most notably their tendency to be in remote locations, they also have a broad array of unique features. These similarities and differences are reflected in the comments that are summarized in the following chapters.

## Chapter III
## Goals and
## Aspirations
## for Children

*"What do you want for your children?"*

Site visitors used that question to launch listening sessions at the various sites. To provide context for shaping research questions and approaches, we encouraged participants to identify the important outcomes they expected for their children and some pathways by which those outcomes could be accomplished (particularly Head Start's role in these processes). In response, participants told us about their immediate and long-term goals and aspirations, then reviewed the ways Head Start is helping tribal children attain them. Participants also identified opportunities for improving Head Start. This chapter presents information on these topics gleaned from the listening sessions.[11]

### EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Listening session participants identified wanting a wide range of educational and vocational opportunities for their children. Realizing these opportunities will entail gaining academic skills, obtaining adaptive and social skills that will enable them to succeed in school, having access to educational resources, graduating from high school or beyond, and attaining gainful employment.

### Academic Skills

Almost universally, parents, staff, and community leaders want basic academic skills instilled in Head Start children (Exhibit A-3). Listening session participants stressed the importance of fundamental school readiness skills, such as knowing colors, shapes, letters, and numbers. In many programs, staff and tribal leaders stressed the importance of beginning reading skills, and several noted the federal government's increasing focus on literacy. Staff from eight programs discussed the importance of building math skills, and participants in five programs talked about their goals for children developing proficiency in the English language. Head Start staff in one site identified the development of general problem-solving and critical-thinking skills as an important educational objective.

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[11]As explained earlier, site-specific information is not provided so as to ensure anonymity. Opinions and recommendations are sorted by type of participant (parents, Head Start staff, and leaders—with the "leaders" category including tribal officials, elders, and community representatives). We note again the primary limitation inherent in relying on information from listening sessions: If a particular item was not mentioned during a listening session, that does not mean it is unimportant; it may simply mean that participants did not raise the point in discussions.

## Other School Readiness Skills

Participants from all sites considered it highly important to instill in their children skills that are not necessarily focused on academics, such as eagerness for—and commitment to—learning (Exhibit A-3). Parents and Head Start staff placed particular emphasis on this aspiration. One parent said she hoped to "instill in my children a love of learning, that school's not just about paperwork and reports!" Other important soft skills mentioned include regular attendance at school, sharing, taking turns, and classroom activities such as lining up.

## Educational Resources

Access to high-quality educational resources and personnel represents a persistent challenge, a problem mentioned during listening sessions at many sites (Exhibit A-3). "Our children should have whatever children in Washington, Baltimore, Chicago, and San Francisco have access to," said one leader of a tribe in a remote location, "whether technology, better programs, or better lesson plans." Parents, staff, and community leaders identified a variety of educational resources they want for their children, including:

- better educated, more experienced teaching staff;

- access to more educational services and programs, especially for children with special cognitive and behavioral needs;

- educational learning materials, such as books, toys, and games;

- better school facilities, including playgrounds and classrooms; and

- access to information technology, such as computers and the Internet.

## Educational Outcomes

Academic skills and educational resources are essential ingredients for AI-AN children's positive educational outcomes. Parents, staff, and leaders from many tribal communities identified graduation from high school, college, or vocational school as an important aspiration. Parents and Head Start staff in three communities described social and economic obstacles their children will face in obtaining higher education, and they commented on the need to ensure that American Indian children have access to the same opportunities in higher education as other children.

## Employment Opportunities

Parents, staff, and tribal leaders from seven sites identified good job opportunities as a fundamental goal for their children (Exhibit A-4). Although mentioned by several participants in remote and midsize programs, no participants from metropolitan area Head Start programs brought up employment opportunities as an important goal. In three programs, participants discussed the importance of instilling a strong work ethic in children so they can eventually get and keep good jobs. Staff and parents from two of these sites expressed their hope that children will obtain education and job skills, then bring them back to the tribal communities to promote economic development. One teacher expressed satisfaction on seeing many former students achieve personal and professional success: "After being here for 23 years, I see the children of my former students coming in. The parents are successful, providing for their families."

*Listening session participants said it is imperative to ensure the strengthening and continuation of tribal identity and culture.*

## TRIBAL IDENTITY AND CULTURE

At every site visited, listening session participants said it is imperative to ensure the strengthening and continuation of tribal identity and culture. They discussed this goal in terms of native language skills, pride in their native identity, preservation of native practices, and respect for diversity, and they also identified challenges to achieving the goal.

### Native Language Skills

Listening session participants in every tribal community identified the acquisition and maintenance of native language skills as a central goal for AI-AN children—and this goal was mentioned in virtually all listening sessions, with every type of participant (Exhibit A-5). They strongly believe that developing and maintaining native language ability helps instill in AI-AN children a sense of pride in their native identity and heritage and also helps to unify the community. Several places had more than one tribe represented in the Head Start program. Listening session participants at these sites talked about the difficulty of deciding which native language(s) to teach to young children.

### Pride in Native Identity

The goal of pride in tribal culture and history was expressed by participants in every AI-AN program visited. Head Start personnel placed particular emphasis on cultivating pride in native identity, with teachers and staff from every program identifying it as a key

goal (Exhibit A-5). "Cultural identity and knowledge is the key to success in all other areas," noted one community leader, capturing the widely held sentiment among participants about the centrality of native identity in their lives. An elder in one site described the critical connection between cultural identity and education in achieving positive outcomes for children: "Language, culture, education, and spirituality all work together to develop a person, making him stronger in body and mind."

## Preservation of Native Practices and Traditions

Along with developing native language skills, most parents, staff, and tribal leaders said they want children to learn and preserve traditional native practices and skills, such as music, dance, crafts, ceremonies, hunting, fishing, and food preparation. At least one group from each community mentioned the goal of preserving some aspect of native traditions among children (Exhibit A-5).

## Respect for Diversity

While stressing the importance of sustaining in children a connection to their tribal and cultural background, many listening session participants also want to foster a respect for diversity and an awareness of other cultures and ways of life (Exhibit A-6). Participants from seven communities said they want children to gain knowledge of and respect for the cultures and traditions of neighboring tribes, and participants from ten communities emphasized the importance of children appreciating non-Indian cultures. The coexistence of multiple cultural and racial/ethnic traditions in many tribal communities makes this goal important. "We have Indians, whites, Hispanics, and blacks in this program," noted a teacher from one Head Start program. "We need to integrate all of their traditions into our curriculum." Head Start parents were particularly likely to articulate the cultivation of respect for diversity as an important goal; it was identified by parents from eleven tribal communities.

*Most parents, staff, and tribal leaders said they want children to learn and preserve traditional native practices and skills.*

## Challenges to Strengthening and Continuing Tribal Identity and Culture

Participants identified several factors that can affect the learning and preservation of native practices and traditions. One challenge is that members within a community may disagree about the proper place for learning the language and honoring the culture—whether these

activities should take place in tribal ceremonial settings, in the home, or in school. Determining the appropriate place is particularly important in tribal communities where language and traditions are strongly associated with spiritual practices open only to tribal members. Another challenge is the declining number of people who are fluent in the native language. In some places, the native language is essentially lost because so few people can speak it. A third challenge is the decrease in tribal members who follow traditional practices. They cite a variety of reasons for the decline. For example, the wide availability of food products means fewer families must engage in subsistence activities to have nourishment; access to television and electronics means family members may be distracted by them; and the encroachment of the dominant society means traditional ways of life may be displaced. Whatever the cause, they said preserving the culture through traditional activities can be very challenging.

## HEALTH OUTCOMES

Listening session participants identified as goals several aspects of children's health that fall into two general categories: (1) good physical and dental health and (2) access to health care resources.

### Physical and Dental Health

Good physical and dental health for AI-AN children is a high-priority goal for many listening session participants. In fact, parents, Head Start staff, or tribal leaders in each of the 18 programs visited mentioned positive health outcomes as a goal for their children (Exhibit A-7). Participants from ten tribal communities identified good physical health as a key goal, and participants from nine communities mentioned the goal of good dental health. As critical first steps to attaining good health, participants discussed the importance of good nutrition for their children, keeping them drug- and alcohol-free, and promoting their physical activity and athletic skills.

### Access to Health Care Resources

Access to high-quality medical and dental facilities is a critical goal for many tribal parents, staff, and leaders (Exhibit A-7). Listening session participants from virtually all sites mentioned the importance of access to high-quality health care resources for their children. In some tribal communities with geographically isolated populations, the issue of health care access for children had particular relevance for

parents, who discussed the problem at length. Participants from nine communities made special note of the need for access to mental and behavioral health care services for their children.

## SOCIAL AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Participants identified a range of goals centering on healthy social development and ethical behavior. These goals include self-esteem, social and life skills, respect for others, a sense of moral and personal responsibility, contributing to the community, and successfully managing racism and prejudice.

### Self-Esteem

Nurturing self-esteem and confidence was identified as a goal for AI-AN children. Participants from all 18 tribal communities mentioned self-esteem as a fundamental goal, with Head Start staff, tribal leaders, and parents all emphasizing its importance (Exhibit A-8). "Indian people sell themselves short," stated one parent with children in Head Start. "We need to knock down the barriers to children's achievement by getting back to the 'warrior spirit' of our people, when they felt they could do anything."

Listening session participants identified several elements of self-esteem as important for their children, including:

- a sense of independence and self-sufficiency;

- assertiveness and a willingness to stand up for one's needs and rights; and

- a sense of ambition and desire to achieve.

### Social and Life Skills

Along with a strong sense of self-esteem, participants discussed the importance of cultivating basic life and social skills in children—skills that will promote success in school, work, and life (Exhibit A-8). They stressed basic life skills, such as having good personal hygiene and having the ability to follow directions. Head Start staff from ten communities placed particular emphasis on these skills. Basic social skills, such as good manners, sharing, and the ability to resolve conflicts and communicate effectively, are major goals, with parents and Head Start staff from nearly all programs highlighting their significance.

## Respect

The concept of respect surfaced so often during listening sessions that it warrants consideration as a goal in its own right. Listening session participants from all tribal communities identified the cultivation of respect as a fundamental aspiration for their children, with support for this goal widely shared by parents, Head Start staff, and tribal leaders (Exhibit A-8). Many participants conceived of respect in terms of deference towards tribal elders, adults, and teachers. Participants in fully half of the sites visited discussed the concept of respect in terms of stewardship and care for the natural environment.

## Moral Sensibility and Personal Responsibility

*Listening session participants from all tribal communities identified the cultivation of respect as a fundamental aspiration for their children, with support for this goal widely shared by parents, Head Start staff, and tribal leaders.*

Parents placed a premium on children developing a strong sense of morality (Exhibit A-8). At 11 sites, parents mentioned "teaching children right from wrong" as an important goal. Participants discussed their wish to imbue children with common sense that will help them make responsible personal choices. Resistance to peer pressure represents one aspect of responsible decision making, with parents and Head Start staff from several communities articulating it as a specific goal for their children.

## Contributing to Society

Commitment to the welfare of the community came through as a strong theme during listening sessions at most of the programs we visited. Parents, staff, and tribal leaders in over half the sites identified a sense of civic duty and responsibility for the well being of the tribe as important goals for children (Exhibit A-9). Participants at many sites conceived of social responsibility in terms of using education, professional skills, and financial resources to advance the social and economic welfare of the tribe as a whole. In several places, parents and staff talked about their hopes to see their children assume important leadership roles and responsibilities in the tribal government. Many participants want their children to benefit from the collective wisdom and support of the broader tribal community, with parents, staff, and tribal leaders from seven sites calling for more active involvement by elders and tribal government in the social and educational development of children.

## Confronting Prejudice and Racism

Participants discussed racial prejudice as a common thread in the lives of many AI-AN children and noted that racism affects children's self-esteem and opportunities for success both within and outside of tribal communities. In the face of this reality, participants from six Head Start sites discussed their desire to instill in children the psychological skills and fortitude to cope with racism against American Indians. The director of one Head Start program expressed the wish that "every child should leave the program with a sense of self, a feeling that they are special, which will allow them to face the prejudices that they will encounter. Their native culture and individual sense of pride will give them the strength to deal with prejudice."

At several sites, participants underscored the goal of having children gain cultural flexibility and resiliency that will allow them to live successfully in both native and non-native communities. "I want my children to learn both the white man's way and our own culture," stated one parent. "I hope my children do not have to struggle through life as we have had to struggle."

*Participants discussed racial prejudice as a common thread in the lives of many AI-AN children.*

In some listening sessions, participants described the issue of racism in terms of a broader social justice agenda. For example, parents, staff, and leaders at six sites described the need for programs and policies that will guarantee their children equal access to educational and economic opportunities. In several places, participants spoke more generally about the need for policies and educational initiatives to eliminate negative stereotypes toward American Indians.

## HOME AND FAMILY LIFE

Listening session participants commented frequently on the central role that the extended family has for children in their communities. They identified goals and aspirations for their children related to (1) parent involvement and (2) safety and stability.

## Parent Involvement

Greater parent involvement in AI-AN children's social and educational development is a universal goal shared across all Head Start programs in this study (Exhibit A-10). Head Start staff placed the strongest emphasis on the need for more parent involvement, with teachers, managers, and support staff from 13 sites identifying it as one fundamental goal. "Family is a big thing," noted one teacher. "The extended

family is also important.  The influence of family does impact the level of a child's participation in Head Start."

Parents talked about the importance of a proactive parental role in children's lives, with listening session participants discussing its significance.  In five programs, participants specifically mentioned the goal of encouraging greater involvement by positive male role models in the lives of tribal children.

## Safety and Stability

Participants identified many components related to the broad goal of nurturing safety and stability in the lives of AI-AN children (Exhibit A-10).  Head Start staff and tribal leaders at six sites defined safety in terms of protecting children from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.  In ten communities, participants described more generally the hope that children have a nurturing and stable family environment, citing as examples the presence of two parents, gainful employment, the absence of drug and alcohol abuse, and nonviolent relationships between adult partners.  One parent explained the importance of Head Start and the whole tribal community in fostering the stability and well-being of families: "This community is a unique community in the old-fashioned sense:  a real family neighborhood.  That means that a goal of Head Start here is to go beyond the child to seeing to the well-being of the whole family."

To reinforce family stability, staff from two programs want to encourage children to delay child bearing until they are older, have more education, and are on sound financial footing.  In three sites, participants identified the fulfillment of children's basic physical needs for food, clothing, and housing as a critical first step in attaining the broader goal of family well-being and stability.  Tribal leaders in eight communities discussed the need for both children and parents to "put families first" by demonstrating a commitment to the needs and welfare of the family.

## HEAD START'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

The preceding section reported on the goals and aspirations listening session participants articulated for their children.  In this section, we summarize participants' comments and discussions about ways that Head Start has contributed to helping achieve those goals and aspirations in four areas:  educational opportunities, health outcomes, family well-being, and children's personal and emotional development.

## Educational Opportunities

Participants identified many areas in which Head Start has promoted the educational development of children in tribal communities. In most programs, participants noted the contribution of Head Start in teaching native language skills and in maintaining native cultural practices and traditions (Exhibit A-11). Referring to powwows held in cooperation with her Head Start program, one parent stated that the "cultural component is terrific. The kids love it and it gets the parents involved. The boys and girls dress up in costumes and learn dances. It's a real community event."

Parents, Head Start staff, and tribal leaders in most programs stressed the role that Head Start has in teaching children essential social skills (for example, resolving conflicts and showing respect) and in building children's basic academic skills, such as reading, counting, and writing. Staff in particular noted that Head Start helps children develop academic skills necessary for later success in K-12 education. Participants in five communities discussed the importance of Head Start in teaching children basic life skills, such as practicing personal hygiene and following directions. At six sites, participants noted the success of Head Start in working with public schools to prepare children for the transition to K-12 education.

## Health Outcomes

Parents, Head Start staff, and community leaders in about half of the programs cited as important the availability of Head Start's medical screenings and health care services for young children (Exhibit A-12). Participants from at least half of the participating tribal communities identified the provision of nutritious meals to children as another important contribution of the Head Start program. One staff member noted, "Head Start is sometimes the only source for meeting the nutritional needs of children."

## Family Well-Being

The encouragement of greater parent involvement in children's educational development stands out as a key contribution of Head Start identified by participants in almost all programs, particularly by staff and parents (Exhibit A-13). Parents and staff also noted that Head Start helps meet the human service needs of families in tribal communities. For example, it provides referrals to employment, health care, and housing services. In six communities, participants described the ways

in which Head Start has created opportunities for educational, economic, and personal growth for the entire family. Commenting on the introduction of additional full-day Head Start sessions, one staff person said, "Parents can go to school or work while their children are here. I've already seen two parents get their AA degrees . . . It's the best thing that's ever happened in this program."

### Children's Personal and Emotional Development

In about half of the participating tribal communities, parents, staff, and tribal leaders stressed the contribution of Head Start in building children's self-esteem and sense of independence. Participants from three sites mentioned that employment of natives in teaching and professional positions at Head Start provides AI-AN children with positive role models. Parents and staff in most programs described the important role of Head Start in fostering a love of learning among AI-AN children; they also commented about the importance of the work that Head Start does to identify and address children's special developmental needs at an early age (Exhibit A-14). Providing children with opportunities for artistic and creative expression is an important contribution of Head Start for parents and staff in several places.

## AREAS FOR CONTINUED GROWTH

While celebrating the many contributions of Head Start in promoting the educational, social, and personal well-being of AI-AN children, listening session participants identified areas in which they hope to see further growth and improvement, particularly in regard to parent and family well-being, child education and well-being, and Head Start programming.

### Parent and Family Well-Being

Listening session participants from all tribal communities want to explore avenues for increasing parent involvement in the social and academic development of AI-AN children. Head Start staff in particular, along with parents themselves, stressed the importance of parental engagement in the education of native children (Exhibit A-15). In two communities, parents specifically mentioned the need to encourage more participation by men in the education of AI-AN children.

To facilitate greater parent involvement, participants from most tribal communities identified a need to improve the literacy and overall education level of parents, as well as increase their awareness of their

*Parents, staff, and tribal leaders stressed the contribution of Head Start in building children's self-esteem and sense of independence.*

vital role in furthering their children's academic and social growth. As part of the effort to maintain native language skills among AI-AN children, participants in four communities want Head Start to do more to improve the native language skills of parents and to encourage the use of native languages in the home.

In almost every participating tribal community, parents, staff, and tribal leaders believe Head Start must do more to address the social, economic, and personal circumstances of families (for example, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and single parenthood), that negatively affect social and educational out-comes for AI-AN children (Exhibit A-15). Summarizing the concerns of participants regarding the difficult circumstances of many families in tribal communities, one tribal leader asked: "How do you empower that young female who didn't graduate from high school or doesn't have a GED and lives with an extended family? She needs some type of job, but more than working at [a fast food restaurant] . . . Somehow, she must manage."

## Child Education and Well-Being

Most parents and staff, along with some tribal leaders, want Head Start to do more to address the special developmental needs of AI-AN children, through, for example, improved curricula, more frequent screenings, and more specialized educational staff and services. Parents, staff, and leaders from nine tribal communities specifically mentioned the need to enhance native language and culture instruction (Exhibit A-16). Among participants at two sites, addressing the health problems of Head Start children that affect learning (such as obesity, head lice, and ear infections) was cited as an area in need of improvement. Participants from four programs want Head Start to work more on fostering the self-esteem of AI-AN children.

## Head Start Programming

Participants from all tribal communities wish to improve communication among Head Start stakeholders, including parents, Head Start staff, tribal governments, and federal agencies (Exhibit A-17). Head Start staff in particular stressed the importance of communication, with virtually all sites identifying it as an area for continued growth. Head Start staff from many programs want to explore better strategies for tracking children's progress and outcomes (identified by staff in seven programs) and for managing paperwork (identified by staff in nine programs).

## SUMMARY

In discussing goals and aspirations for their children, listening session participants provided a lengthy list of positive outcomes in the areas of education, tribal identity, health, and personal development. They want children to succeed in school and graduate from high school or postsecondary programs; they want children to learn the native language and honor the tribal culture; they want children to have good physical and emotional health; and they want children to become moral individuals. Participants credit Head Start as contributing to the achievement of these goals by providing children with school readiness skills, access to health services, and opportunities for family involvement and services.

Among parents, respect for diversity and a strong sense of personal responsibility are important goals for their children, and they credit the development of basic academic and social skills as major contributions from Head Start. Head Start staff made similar comments, and they also discussed their interests in improving the literacy and educational levels of Head Start parents; improving communication between themselves and parents, Head Start administrators, and tribal leaders; and finding better ways to track children's needs, progress, and outcomes.

# Chapter IV
# Research Topics and Methods

The primary purpose of this project is to identify candidate research topics regarding American Indian-Alaska Native young children. The previous chapter discussed outcomes that American Indian-Alaska Native participants identified as important for their children, as well as their perceptions of Head Start's role in achieving those outcomes. They followed these topics with ideas about the types of Head Start-related research that would be useful. In this chapter, we present their suggestions and recommendations for conducting research that will lead to improvements in Head Start programs for American Indian and Alaska Native children.[12]

## RECOMMENDED RESEARCH TOPICS

Listening session participants in all sites expressed interest in a wide variety of research topics. Most recommendations for research fell into one of several categories: tribal identity and culture; educational outcomes of AI-AN children; Head Start operations; screening, assessment, and outcomes measurement; child health and development; staff and professional development; parent involvement; and environmental factors that affect educational and life outcomes for AI-AN children.

## Tribal Identity and Culture

Tribal identity and culture was consistently raised as a primary issue in response to the question, "What do you want for your children?" In this area, listening session participants offered many suggestions for research, which fell into two categories: studies on the use of and instruction in the native language and studies on tribal identity. Their recommendations are summarized below.

### *Native Language*

Almost every Head Start program we visited used the native language to some extent. The range of such instruction was broad. At one end of the spectrum, some centers had language immersion programs; at the other end, some had a few pictures of foods, plants, or animals labeled with native words.

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[12]As before, all sites and participants are anonymous. The absence of a recommended research topic does not mean it was of no interest to the particular set of listening session participants; instead, it means that the topic was not raised in discussion.

Parents, staff, or tribal leaders at all but six sites identified a priority need for research on the role of Head Start in maintaining or advancing native language skills development (Exhibit A-18). Many emphasized the urgency of teaching the native language so as to ensure its survival, especially because of the diminished number of native speakers; this decline, often dramatic, can be attributed to the effects of boarding schools for Indians that frequently banned use of the native language, lack of native language use at home among the parent generation of today's Head Start-age children, intermarriage between individuals from different tribes or language backgrounds, and the effects of acculturation such as popular music and television. In six programs staff and tribal leaders expressed interest in research on barriers to effective native language instruction.

A few individuals noted they see apparently competing demands for native language and English language instruction. Although the vast majority of listening session participants strongly support native language instruction, some—mostly parents—were concerned that their children may not be getting the "head start" they need in terms of English language skills. Others believe that having children learn two languages is beneficial to the child, and they would be interested in more systematic information on the subject. Parents in two very large programs recommended research on differences in educational outcomes for bilingual children vs. English-only children; staff in one program and tribal leaders in another program also suggested research in this area.

Multiple native languages and Spanish were in several Head Start programs. In two such programs, parents recommended research to determine effective ways to promote native language instruction in a multi-language environment.

### *Cultural and Tribal Identity*

Helping children develop and maintain pride in their cultural and tribal identity is a primary aspiration voiced in every listening session we conducted. Participants, especially parents and staff, across all but five of the 18 programs recommended research on the ways that Head Start does and could foster tribal identity, pride, and knowledge of the culture (Exhibit A-19). Some recommended research on challenges Head Start and the tribal community face in balancing the maintenance of native identity with preparing children for school and jobs that may be pursued in non-Indian institutions and settings.

Parents at one site and tribal leaders at another would like to see research on ways to involve tribal elders in culture and language instruction and to determine effective ways to encourage their involvement in helping young children acquire knowledge of tradition. Parents, staff, and tribal leaders from several programs recommended research on diversity issues to address the needs of children and families of mixed ancestry. This recommendation tended to come from communities with representation from these groups among their populace.

## Education

Listening session participants discussed the importance of education for AI-AN children. They identified several areas for potential research, including many suggestions for descriptive information that could be used to inform Head Start program planning and decision making.

### Long-Term Educational Outcomes

*A nearly universal focus of the listening sessions was on research into the long-term educational outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native children who attend Head Start programs as compared to AI-AN children who do not.*

A nearly universal focus of the listening sessions was on research into the long-term educational outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native children who attend Head Start programs as compared to AI-AN children who do not. The issue is particularly important to staff and tribal leaders: of the 18 programs visited, research on long-term educational outcomes was mentioned by staff in 10 programs and tribal leaders in 10 programs (Exhibit A-20). Participants want to know whether AI-AN children who attend Head Start have greater success in school than their AI-AN peers who do not attend Head Start. "Success in school" takes on many dimensions for the listening session participants; they include:

- attendance: Do Head Start children have more regular school attendance?

- engagement: Are Head Start children more involved with their schooling?

- graduation rates: Are Head Start children more likely to graduate from high school?

- postsecondary school: Are Head Start children more likely to attend vocational school or college?

A similar topic that generated similar levels of interest concerns long-term educational outcomes for AI-AN Head Start children as compared to children from other Head Start programs (Exhibit A-20).

Listening session participants—especially staff and tribal leaders—asked the same questions regarding success in school, wanting to know how "their" children compared to other Head Start children.

One question of concern was raised in all programs we visited: why do American Indian and Alaska Native children have difficulties succeeding in school once they leave Head Start? As one parent said, "When our children leave Head Start, they are enthusiastic learners with a world of opportunity ahead of them. What happens to thwart them?" Listening session participants were fully familiar with the problem and mentioned loss of interest in school, high drop out rates, academic failure, and poorer life outcomes due to inadequate education. In two programs, participants questioned whether children enrolled in a tribal elementary school would have better results than those attending non-tribal schools. Parents in one community and staff in two other communities questioned the effects on AI-AN children as they move from programs, such as Head Start, where they are in the majority population to elementary, middle, or high schools, where they are in the minority.

*Staff and parents want to know about factors that affect children's success in K-12 schooling.*

Staff and parents want to know about factors that affect children's success in K-12 schooling, including expectations for students, the quality and skills of teachers, adequacy of books and materials, staff attitudes, culturally appropriate instruction, and encouragement of parent involvement. They suggested research on the following:

- ways to take the approaches that make Head Start successful and apply them in K-12 education;

- strategies to reduce drop out rates; and

- effective approaches to encourage AI-AN young people to pursue postsecondary education.

Some also recommended studies on the effects of Head Start for AI-AN children's long-term job opportunities, determining strategies so that the Head Start approach can be applied to K-12 education, research on prospects for having children remain in tribal communities after they attend high school and college, and descriptive information about career and vocational preferences and choices of AI-AN children.

### School Readiness

The question of school readiness was recommended as a research topic in many programs, with parents expressing high levels of interest in knowing how prepared their children are to enter kindergarten and do well there and in the primary grades (Exhibit A-21). Many listening session participants believe AI-AN Head Start children are very well prepared for school and provided anecdotal information about children's abilities to perform well. They cited comments from teachers and offered their own observations about children's skills in classroom routines, such as lining up, taking turns, sitting quietly, and being comfortable in an educational setting. They are interested in research that would systematically assess the advantages that Head Start children have upon entering school, both in terms of classroom routines and academic knowledge (such as the basics of letter and number recognition).

Parents and staff were very knowledgeable about Head Start's emphasis on preparing children in both basic life skills and basic academic skills. Staff from three programs expressed interest in learning about the effectiveness of Head Start in teaching children basic life skills, wanting to know the success of Head Start in helping children under-stand the importance of matters such as hygiene (e.g., washing hands and brushing teeth). Staff and parents from several programs are interested in learning about the effectiveness of Head Start in teaching basic academic skills and helping children gain knowledge (such as learning shapes, colors, numbers, and letters of the alphabet). Potential research on preparing children in basic life and academic skills was mentioned by tribal leaders, community representatives, and elders at only one site, perhaps reflecting their distance from the particulars of day-to-day Head Start operations.

### Learning Needs of AI-AN Children

Some sense exists in parts of the American Indian-Alaska Native population and in some research literature as well that AI-AN children may have learning styles or approaches to learning that differ from other children. Of the 18 sites we visited, staff in eight programs, parents in three, and tribal leaders in two said they were interested in research that would look into this concept of learning styles (Exhibit A-22). Participants speculated that AI-AN children may be more oriented to group rather than individual activities, and they may

learn more from observation than from study. Listening session participants who discussed the issue of learning styles said they would like to know more about the learning styles of their children so that instruction can be appropriately geared to provide children optimum benefits.

In several communities, individuals commented on the need to identify and build on the academic strengths and interests of AI-AN children. In two sites, parents or staff talked about the importance of not focusing research on "what's wrong with Indian children" but on "what's right with Indian children," then developing educational services that complement those strengths.

### *Instruction*

Surprisingly, we heard very little from participants regarding research on the curriculum used in their Head Start programs, although staff in half the programs visited commented on the need to improve Head Start curricula in terms of their educational value and cultural appropriateness. As a whole, however, the groups did identify some possible areas for research regarding the content or structure of Head Start instruction, including these:

- the effectiveness of mixing age groups in Head Start classrooms;

- benefits and drawbacks of extending the length of the Head Start day or the Head Start year;

- effects of long bus rides on young children's abilities to benefit from Head Start;[13]

- methods for collaborating with elementary and secondary schools to improve instruction and enhance the school readiness of Head Start children;

- effective instructional methods and resulting outcomes for children; and

- research on challenges, issues, and strategies for meeting the local school district's educational standards.

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[13]The site making this recommendation has a lot of families living at long distances from Head Start centers.

## Head Start Operations

Tribal leaders, Head Start staff, community representatives, and parents had a lot to say regarding Head Start operations, much of which focused on the need for additional funding. Without any prompting from us, staff at nine sites, parents at four sites, and community leaders at five sites directly proposed the topic of "strategies to obtain more funding" as a candidate for research. Similarly, parents, staff, or tribal leaders in nine programs wanted research on ways to meet Head Start requirements and the needs of families, given limited personnel and resources. These issues are discussed below.

### *Funding*

Listening session participants recommended research about Head Start fiscal resources in several areas:

- differences in the financial needs of urban vs. rural AI-AN Head Start programs;

- assessment of the relative costs of providing Head Start services in AI-AN vs. other settings;

- determination of whether Head Start resources are equitably distributed, given differences in relative costs;

- determining the effects of class size on educational outcomes;[14] and

- estimates regarding Head Start's potential for accomplishments if additional resources were available.

### *Communication*

Staff and tribal leaders (but not parents) in several programs commented on the need for research to examine communication methods between Head Start and the tribal government (Exhibit A-23). Overall, staff are interested in learning about ways to better engage tribal leaders in Head Start operations; in turn, tribal leaders would like to learn about Head Start's services to the community and its accomplishments for families (although a couple cautioned that they get a bit too much information and have trouble sifting through it).

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[14]The effect of class size is placed in this section, rather than one on education, because listening session participants focused on the fact that limited resources restricted the program's ability to lower class size.

Staff from about half of the programs visited would like research into effective ways to change perceptions in their communities—especially among tribal leaders—that view Head Start as a daycare or "babysitting" service, rather than a vital education and early childhood development program. They hope that this would lead tribal leaders and elders to give the program greater support and to get more involved with its services (for example, by having elders share their knowledge of native languages and culture).

We also heard about the need for research regarding effective communication with parents. Parents are particularly interested in learning about (1) their children's progress in the program and (2) ways to bring nonparticipating parents into Head Start activities. Staff are particularly interested in finding ways to get Head Start parents to read or hear information provided about the program.

## Screening, Assessment, and Outcomes Measurement

Head Start requires that all children be screened for health and developmental status within 45 days of their entry into the program. A newer set of requirements calls for assessing children's progress through Head Start at least three times during the program year and for measuring their achievement of certain outcomes. The topics of assessment and outcomes measurement were particularly salient throughout all of Head Start during the time we were conducting this project and were frequently discussed during listening sessions. In general, participants expressed concerns about the appropriateness of available measures for assessing American Indian-Alaska Native populations.

*Discussion about the validity and cultural appropriateness of instruments used to screen and assess AI-AN Head Start children evoked strong opinions among some listening session participants.*

### Validity of Measurement

Discussion about the validity and cultural appropriateness of instruments used to screen and assess AI-AN Head Start children evoked strong opinions among some listening session participants. Several spoke of the need to ensure that tools used with their children would produce valid results, but expressed doubt that current methods and instruments do so. They want to make sure that measures of AI-AN children are beneficial to those children, do not inaccurately diagnose or label children, and correctly identify the strengths and needs of children. Parents, staff, and tribal leaders in a variety of sites recommended research to determine which diagnostic tests and administrative procedures are culturally appropriate for their children (Exhibit A-24).

They are concerned that some tools used to screen children for developmental delays might be inappropriate, with adverse consequences for children and families.  As an example, a special needs coordinator in a program located in a cold climate said, "This test asks the kid to identify a thermometer.  But the picture in the test is of a round thermometer.  Our kids only know the long kind because temperatures here get so cold, they'd be off the charts on a round thermometer."

## Procedures for Measurement

Head Start teachers are acutely aware of the need to ensure that screenings and assessments are done correctly.  A few expressed concern that some individuals do not have the full set of skills to do so, especially in regard to screening for developmental delays.  At one site, staff expressed concern that the Head Start special needs coordinator did not have sufficient skills to administer the screening tool, and as a result a very high proportion of children were identified—erroneously, as it turned out—as needing mental health services.  In another community, staff worried because someone from the public school system came into Head Start to perform screenings, but this individual "doesn't know our kids."  In this case, staff would prefer that screenings be conducted by someone more familiar with the tribal culture or more familiar with particular families.  Their concerns led to recommendations for research on ways that screening and assessment procedures—as conducted in tribal settings—affect measurement.

A few supervisory staff questioned the ability of teachers to assess children's progress through Head Start consistently and accurately.  Most staff use teacher notes and anecdotes to document accomplishments, but few have received the comprehensive training needed to observe and record information systematically.  More than one Head Start education manager expressed a bit of discomfort with current practices, which are a bit casual and typically consist of jotting notes in student files or writing notes on sticky pads.  They suggested research about the competencies necessary to assess children's progress and methods of training staff to develop and apply those skills.

In several listening sessions, participants talked about Head Start requirements for measuring outcomes.  In four programs, staff suggested research be conducted on the challenges and issues facing AI-AN programs as they work to meet the federal outcomes measurement requirements.  Tribal leaders in two programs and staff in three programs

recommended research on the challenges and issues facing AI-AN programs as they implement Head Start performance standards.

## Health and Development

Parents, staff, tribal leaders, and community representatives were all aware of the important role Head Start plays in children's social and emotional development and in helping children attain good overall health and dental health.  Their recommendations for research in these areas are presented below.

### *Social and Emotional Development*

An assortment of parents, staff, and tribal leaders recommended research on the success of Head Start in teaching social skills—such as getting along with others, sharing, and managing conflict—and having children incorporate those skills into their daily lives; they also recommended studies on the ways Head Start fosters high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence and research on strategies for managing behavioral issues in Head Start classrooms (Exhibit A-25).  Additional topics for research include:

- studying the formation of social groups and their effects on educational outcomes;

- determining whether enrollment in Head Start is associated with reduced suicide rates among adolescent American Indians and Alaska Natives; and

- exploring the effects on educational outcomes of mental health issues that affect children, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and reactive-attachment disorder.

### *Physical Health and Well-Being*

Listening session participants in almost all sites recommended research to gather and provide basic, descriptive information about (1) the prevalent health problems among American Indian and Alaska Native children and (2) access to and quality of health services available to Head Start families (Exhibit A-26).  Many were also interested in research on promoting healthy practices such as physical activity and good nutrition, ways for AI-AN children to avoid health problems such as diabetes and obesity, and methods for reinforcing positive health practices in the home (Exhibit A-27).

Additional research topics regarding physical health and well-being that participants recommended are:

- environmental hazards affecting children's health and learning abilities;

- the effectiveness of Head Start in preventing substance and alcohol abuse among Head Start parents;

- the role of traditional native food, medicine, and treatment in preventing and managing health problems; and

- information about maternal health and pregnancy outcomes.

### Special Needs

Parents, staff, and tribal leaders found several potential research topics as they discussed special needs children. They are particularly interested in three interrelated areas: (1) identifying the prevalence and incidence of learning disabilities, such as speech and language disorders, among AI-AN children; (2) research on the unique characteristics and learning styles of AI-AN special needs children; and (3) determining effective methods for identifying and addressing developmental delays (Exhibit A-28).

Two programs would like studies on the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects on educational outcomes for American Indian and Alaska Native children. Staff in one program recommended research on the success of AI-AN Head Start programs in meeting the needs of gifted and talented children.

## Staff and Staff Development

The listening sessions for this study took place at a time when staff were preparing to meet the congressional requirement that at least 50 percent of all Head Start classroom teachers have, at a minimum, an associate's degree. Listening session participants had a lot of suggestions about research on Head Start staffing issues, as discussed below.

### Staff Recruitment and Retention

All Head Start programs, including those for AI-AN children, face the issue of recruiting and retaining qualified staff, especially teachers (and in some cases, bus drivers). Listening session participants in seven programs said this was an area of need. Recruitment and retention challenges are exacerbated for AI-AN programs because so

many are in extremely rural locations, which means the pool of candidates for jobs can be very small.  In listening sessions, participants recommended research on the following:

- analysis of wage and benefits comparability across Head Start programs and for Head Start versus other job opportunities, such as in public or private preschools and elementary schools;

- strategies for recruiting highly qualified staff;

- causes of staff turnover; and

- ways to retain highly qualified, experienced staff.

### Teaching Skills

Several communities recommended conducting studies on the relationship between teachers' experience and outcomes for Head Start children (Exhibit A-29).  Many participants believe that more skilled teachers will produce better outcomes for their children, and they would be interested in research to determine whether this is the case.  At the same time, a few teachers cautioned that a "good" teacher may not always hold a degree or have a certain number of years of experience; similarly, some other staff (usually supervisors) cautioned that lengthy years of service do not always indicate a "good," dedicated teacher. Some programs recommended developing and conducting research on ways to improve staff knowledge of the native language and culture.

*Several communities recommended conducting studies on the relationship between teachers' experience and outcomes for Head Start children.*

Listening session participants in two programs expressed interest in research on whether and how information and skills gained from attending conferences or training sessions get transferred to other personnel and into the Head Start classroom.  Two sites suggested research on the effects of teachers' attitudes and methods for interacting with children regarding educational outcomes.  They sense that high expectations and positive, frequent, verbal interactions benefit children and are interested in data to confirm their beliefs.

### Professional Development

The programs visited for this project are in a wide variety of geographic locations, with attendant variation in access to training opportunities and postsecondary education.  Some are in or not far from relatively urban areas with several colleges and universities nearby, whereas others are more than 100 miles from the nearest postsecondary institution, in areas with limited Internet access (which effectively eliminates distance

learning opportunities).  Participants spoke about additional difficulties they face in encouraging professional development for teaching staff.  Many have personal and family obligations that limit the amount of time available for attending classes; some are disinclined to enroll in postsecondary education; some fear that insufficient basic skills in English and math will affect their ability to do well in school; and many commented that the pay differential between those with and without degrees is so small that attaining a degree is not worth the effort.

We saw a remarkable degree of variability in the efforts programs and tribes make to enable Head Start teachers to pursue postsecondary education.  Some fully subsidize the effort, paying tuition and providing release time for teachers to attend class and study.  One program brings professors to the Head Start center, but staff still find it challenging to attend classes and complete homework assignments.  In one program, staff must pay their own tuition, fees, and transportation costs—but even these burdens are not enough to stop a handful of young women, including a cook and a bus driver, who are determined to earn their associate's degree.

Listening session participants are keenly interested in research on ways to give teachers more access to professional development opportunities (Exhibit A-30).  They also recommended studies on the following topics:

- the effects of geographic isolation on Head Start staff development;

- the degree of Head Start staff proficiency in the native language;

- the relevance and appropriateness of certification and educational requirements to the educational, cultural, and social needs of AI-AN children;

- disciplinary practices of Head Start teachers; and

- adequacy of Head Start staff supervision of children in their care.

## Parent Involvement

Listening session participants in many programs expressed interest in research on strategies to increase parents' involvement in their children's social, emotional, and academic development.  Several groups of parents, Head Start staff, and tribal leaders recommended studies on the effects of parent involvement on their children's educational outcomes, along with a greater understanding of the reasons that underlie minimal parent involvement (Exhibit A-31).

Participants knew about Head Start's role in helping parents understand more about child development, nutrition, health, and similar topics. They suggested research on ways to better perform these functions for parents. Similarly, several sites would like research on Head Start's function in promoting adult education and literacy, both for descriptive studies on Head Start activities in this area and on ways to enhance Head Start's role (Exhibit A-32).

At a few sites, participants suggested additional research topics. Studies on strategies to increase fathers' and male involvement in children's social, emotional, and academic development were of interest to parents at three sites and staff at one. Research on parents' disciplinary practices and their effects on children's mental health and educational outcomes was raised as a candidate topic by parents at one site and staff at another.

## Environmental Conditions

Comments from listening session participants highlighted the fact that many Head Start programs visited for this project serve children growing up in extremely difficult circumstances. In addition to being subjected to abject poverty on many reservations, the current cohort of Head Start children is described as affected by legacies of racism and hardship. Listening session participants suggested some of these issues in the subjects they identified for research.

### *Poverty and Geographic Isolation*

Participants recommended research into the effects of poverty on the educational outcomes of their children. Many were aware of individuals who succeeded against all odds and wanted to both highlight those experiences and determine factors that enabled people to overcome extreme circumstances. Staff in two locations suggested research on the effects of geographic isolation for access to educational, social welfare, and health services; one program with many Head Start centers suggested research on differences in children's educational outcomes that could be attributed to their place of residence on the reservation.

### *Social and Community Factors*

Listening session participants identified a variety of topics for research on factors that directly and indirectly affect outcomes for Head Start children. These include:

- the effects of racism on AI-AN children's emotional and educational development;

- the extent to which tribal leaders are involved in Head Start policies, programs, and decision making;

- the effects of welfare reform on Head Start families; and

- consequences of the boarding school experience for Head Start families.

### *Family Structure and Dynamics*

Participants spoke often of the hardships Head Start children encounter in their homes and indicated that research on these factors and their effects is a high priority (Exhibit A-33). Staff and community leaders—but not parents—from seven sites talked about the need for studies on the growth of young women having children and the increase in single-parent families. Staff in seven communities, leaders in two sites, and parents in one program recommended research to understand the causes of adult substance and alcohol abuse and their effects on children. Additional areas for research that were mentioned included the following:

- the effects of domestic violence and child maltreatment on young children;

- consequences for children whose parents work and are not always available to supervise them; and

- effective substance abuse prevention and treatment strategies.

## CONDUCTING RESEARCH AMONG AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE HEAD START PROGRAMS

During listening sessions with tribal leaders, elders, Head Start staff, parents, and community representatives, we asked for recommendations about ways to conduct research. Two sites have Institutional Review Boards (IRB), charged with ensuring the protection of human subjects in any research endeavor. Staff in these programs commented that their IRBs may review the intent and content of proposed research to make sure that it is consistent with the tribe's priorities and culture. A manager responsible for cultural matters at another site performs a similar function.

Some sites were invited to participate in this study because of their proximity to or relationship with a tribal college or university. With rare exception, linkages between Head Start programs and these postsecondary institutions consist primarily of Head Start staff taking

classes toward earning certificates or degrees.  Currently, there is very little research activity connecting tribal colleges or universities with these sites.

Of the programs we visited, relatively few had any direct or recent experience with research.  We talked with listening session participants about research studies from the past 10 years they had been involved with or heard about.  Participants in ten places could not recall participating in or sponsoring any studies, except for the community needs assessment that Head Start requires.  In other communities, participants listed the following studies and said that most were very small:

- health and nutrition studies, such as those examining the frequency of Alzheimer's disease, the relationship between diet and the onset of childhood obesity and risk for diabetes, general studies on diabetes, baby bottle tooth decay, cancer, effects of traditional medicine on native women's health, and myopia among young children;

- one study about a science curriculum;

- assessing children's development through research on children enrolled in Early Head Start, a study that tested Head Start children's recognition and knowledge of local plants and animals, and two studies on school readiness and transition to kindergarten;

- a study on seat belt use;

- one project on domestic violence;

- research on adolescents, including an evaluation of a program on abstinence and pregnancy prevention and a survey on juvenile well-being;

- two studies on language and culture conducted in a single community, one involving elders that examined language prevalence and prospects for the language's revival and maintenance, and the other on cultural preservation;

- one study about the impact of supplemental readiness training for children and parents before entering Head Start; and

- a study on the effects of historical trauma.

In the sections below, we summarize the listening session participants' suggestions and commentary, with recommendations aggregated to the community level.  The chapter concludes with observations about conducting research in tribal communities.

## Transparency

Perhaps the most consistent theme to emerge from the listening sessions was that any research conducted among tribal Head Start programs should be transparent. This means that studies should have clearly stated purposes, should have no hidden agendas, and should be completely available to the tribal community.

Participants had several suggestions on ways to ensure that research is designed, implemented, and completed in a transparent manner. They include:

- build trust with the tribal community before starting any research projects;

- involve the tribal community in making decisions about research needs and priorities;

- fully disclose the purposes and objectives of research projects; and

- share all findings with the community.

A few sites had additional suggestions, such as establishing a tribal committee to guide and approve any research studies, gaining the support of tribal governments as a first step in designing research, and having the tribal council make all decisions about research.

## Cultural Sensitivity

Participants were insistent that cultural sensitivity must be fully present in any research conducted (Exhibit A-34). Many, especially older individuals, commented that the American Indian community had been subjected to enough "experimentation" that was disrespectful of its customs, traditions, and values. To help redress past errors, participants in five communities said that any research must consciously and diligently avoid stereotypes, assumptions, or generalizations about American Indian and Alaska Native populations. At seven sites, participants said it is essential for both the research design and the researchers to actively demonstrate respect for and sensitivity toward the individual tribe and its values. Reacting to previous abuses of "research" and sharing histories about the misuse of data (such as labeling AI-AN children as "slow learners" or suitable only for vocational tracks in high school), listening session participants urged all parties involved with any research to exercise extreme sensitivity and awareness regarding the way that research findings would be interpreted and used.

*Perhaps the most consistent theme to emerge from the listening sessions was that any research conducted among tribal Head Start programs should be transparent.*

## Resources

People in the listening sessions considered two resources necessary in conducting research—staff and money. Participants in most communities said it is important to have American Indians or Alaska Natives on research teams that conduct studies (Exhibit A-35). Interestingly, two positions were articulated, sometimes within the same community. One perspective is that the particular tribal affiliation of native members on the research team does not matter; in other words, as long as native populations are represented, the recommendation would be met. The other perspective is that local tribe members should be included as members of the research team. Participants at one site recommended having outsiders—individuals who do not reside in the local community and are not members of the local tribe—conduct research because of their greater objectivity. One said, "Sometimes it's better to have outsiders so that private business stays private and doesn't become common knowledge."

A wide range of listening session participants expressed doubt that the federal government would carry through on its interest in sponsoring research for AI-AN Head Start programs, often referring to previous promises that have been made and not kept or the challenges of gaining sufficient interest from policy makers and program planners to develop and sustain initiatives that will benefit native populations. One community cautioned anyone considering research to be realistic about the capacity of tribes to conduct studies, especially in light of limited financial and personnel resources. Assuming the federal government is able to support research for AI-AN Head Start programs, respondents suggested:

- providing funds specifically and exclusively dedicated to American Indian-Alaska Native Head Start research projects;

- seeking assistance from or partnering with academic institutions that have resources to conduct research; and

- turning to more affluent tribes to help support research endeavors.

## Implementing Research Studies

Individuals in several communities had additional recommendations affecting the way that research should be conducted. Participants at two sites suggested providing cash incentives for those who participate in research. People at another two sites urged that research not intrude on, interrupt, or make demands on classroom routines or staff time.

Staff in one place felt that a lot of information already existed in Head Start programs or with other service providers, and they recommended obtaining and analyzing those data.

## SUMMARY

Listening session participants identified a wide range of topics for future research regarding AI-AN children.  Parents, Head Start staff, and tribal leaders recommended research on ways to promote children's native language skills and pride in their tribal identity and cultural traditions.  Participants expressed interest in research on the long-term educational outcomes of AI-AN children, barriers to success in school after they leave Head Start, and strategies for improving children's school readiness.  Participants suggested further research on valid, reliable, and culturally appropriate screening and assessment methods.  Other research topics of interest include the emotional and physical well-being of AI-AN children; strategies for increasing parent involvement in children's social, emotional, and academic development; and the effects of environmental factors, such as poverty, geographic isolation, and family structure, on AI-AN children's educational outcomes.

Parents tend to stress research on fostering tribal identity and cultural knowledge, effective means of communication between parents and teachers, and health outcomes of AI-AN children.  Head Start staff share these interests with parents and emphasize a range of other research topics, including learning styles of AI-AN children, staff access to educational and professional development opportunities, and family structure and dynamics that affect educational outcomes.  Tribal leaders share a strong interest in research on the long-term educational outcomes of AI-AN children and also recommend research on effective communication strategies between Head Start staff and tribal government.

Although many programs we visited had limited experience with research, listening session participants shared many ideas about ways to conduct research in tribal communities.  Parents, staff, and tribal leaders stressed the importance of transparency in conducting research, the need for researchers to show cultural sensitivity in carrying out and reporting research results, and the importance of including American Indians and Alaska Natives on research teams.

## Chapter V
## Themes and
## Implications
## for Research

Seven important research themes emerge from the activities conducted for this project—preparing the research synthesis, obtaining input from the consultant panel, and gathering information from listening sessions at tribal programs. These themes are highlighted in this chapter; we review them as they relate to establishing a research agenda for AI-AN Head Start programs.

An overarching theme calls for recognizing the **uniqueness of individual tribal communities and tribal sovereignty.** As a member of the consultant panel said, "If you've seen one tribe, you've seen one tribe." The research literature, the native community, and our field work confirm this statement, which suggests that each tribe has its own history, culture, traditions, and norms. Given their diversity, the notion of conducting research aggregated across tribes to something that could be considered the "Indian" experience, program, or category would be misleading. Still, many segments of the AI-AN Head Start community share common characteristics, such as the effects of historical trauma (including the boarding school experience), prejudice, poverty, tension between traditional ways and contemporary life, and for many, the challenges of living in remote areas.

A key emphasis was that any consideration of AI-AN research must start at one point: Recognition of tribal sovereignty is essential. AI-AN programs operate in a setting where their supervisory body and possessor of authority (the tribe) has a government-to-government relationship with the United States. The relationship is not necessarily adversarial, but it is a reality any research must respect, address, and accommodate. It is extremely unlikely that any research could even be considered in AI-AN Head Start programs without the tribal government's advice and consent.

Relationships with tribal governments will affect studies. Even in this project, which was to gather information on tribal priorities for research (and not conduct research or collect data), we had to carefully learn about and conscientiously follow tribal protocol to gain access into communities. Tribal authorities will undoubtedly be deeply involved with planning and designing research studies and their interests will probably affect schedules, content, methods, and personnel. Because tribal governments are elected, changes among office holders may affect the planning and implementation of research studies. Changes among office holders may also affect Head Start personnel because some positions are appointed by tribal councils or elected leaders.

In short, any research agenda developed for AI-AN Head Start programs must recognize tribal sovereignty and respect the uniqueness of individual tribal communities.

A second theme focuses on the need for **cultural appropriateness**, both in conducting research and in serving AI-AN children. Consultant panel members and listening session participants frequently mentioned how essential it would be for researchers to understand, fully respect, and accommodate tribal cultures. Both consultant panel members and the literature question whether specific standardized tools often used in studies of early childhood are appropriate for particular AI-AN populations, and there was widespread sentiment among participants that the answer is often "probably not." The need to ensure cultural appropriateness should be a strong consideration in designing and executing research studies in AI-AN settings.

Culture is likely to be a central focus of future research, both as a topic in itself and as an essential overarching consideration in designing and executing research. Discussions with listening session participants were suffused with this topic, with more pointed recommendations about the use of culturally appropriate tools and instruments, the effects of incorporating culturally appropriate materials into classrooms, and the use of culturally appropriate research methods. Still, making the construct of culture accurately and sensitively operational in order to conduct these kinds of studies will be challenging.

The incorporation of native languages into children's learning experiences was a topic endorsed by most participants, who expressed interest both in identifying the best ways for Head Start to assist in sustaining the native language as well as the influence of the language on children's outcomes. The role of the native language is a subset of the culture issue, and it is fraught with practical and emotional considerations. Virtually everyone we met with supports the concept of sustaining the native language, but opinions quickly diverged once the concept was articulated and the focus shifted to how to realize it. Some programs that report strong native language instruction in fact have relatively little because teachers themselves do not have sufficient native language skills. In many places, the language has not been incorporated into developmentally appropriate curricula. Others face the situation of serving children from multiple tribes, with multiple languages—or serving children whose home language is Spanish. Some have tried to get the few remaining elders who speak the language to share their skills with Head Start children, but have been frustrated because the

effort fails. Others hear from parents who want a strong focus on English so their children are prepared to succeed in elementary school. Some community members may believe that language instruction is the responsibility of the family, especially when the native language is sacred. The differences of opinions within communities can be strong; the challenges can be even stronger.

The third theme probes the **absence of systematic, rigorous studies and research about AI-AN children.** As documented in the research synthesis we prepared, early childhood education for American Indians and Alaska Natives is seriously understudied; the little research that has been conducted relies heavily on qualitative methods. A few studies use systematic measures and approaches, so some work has been conducted that is closer to commonly accepted research standards in education and social science. Methodological challenges (such as small populations resulting in small sample sizes), issues in gaining tribal acceptance and permission to conduct work, and a lack of sub-stantial financial support have combined to produce the current situation of only limited research-based information about AI-AN children.

A fourth theme emerged strongly from the listening sessions: attention must be paid to **the long-term success of AI-AN children.** Listening session participants were insistent on that. In fact, at every site we visited, interest in a longitudinal study to follow Head Start children through elementary and secondary school was raised. Consultant panel members and the literature reinforce this recommendation. There is extensive anecdotal evidence about factors people believe are likely to enhance positive outcomes, such as enrollment in Head Start programs, involvement of parents and extended family members, access to high quality health care and education, high expectations for children, literacy and social skills, and community-level role models. But there is no systematic research in tribal settings that measures relevant factors, determines their contributions to positive outcomes, and identifies ways to replicate those factors elsewhere. It simply does not exist.

The relationship between the quality and skills of teachers to child outcomes was another topic that received a great deal of attention. We heard quite a bit of ambivalence from Head Start teachers toward the need or value of taking postsecondary education classes. It is likely that our experience was somewhat temporal because at the time of our visits, the date was rapidly approaching when half of all Head Start teachers would be required to hold at least an associate's degree.

Access to postsecondary training is severely limited in some communities, with the nearest educational institution sometimes an hour or two away. Distance learning is not always an option: some areas do not have Internet access, and others would incur a long-distance charge for a dial-up service. Many staff resisted the notion of additional education, feeling that their years of experience and understanding of children should be enough—especially when there is little, if any, pay differential between teachers with and without degrees.

Programs generally made efforts to help teachers pursue higher-level education. All provided some form of release time for teachers to attend class or study; one even brought college faculty to the Head Start center so teachers would not have to travel. Some individuals (especially young people) were willing to go great lengths to earn certificates or degrees, even when they had to dig into their own pockets to pay for gas, tuition, fees, and books. These people have strong motivations. Still, there is a need to demonstrate how postsecondary education and other teacher qualifications contribute to children's outcomes.

The fifth theme is related to the fourth. Members of tribal communities expressed a **deep interest in research to benefit AI-AN children.** This theme was somewhat surprising, especially because the consultant panel and some pieces in the research literature caution that American indigenous populations have been the subject of countless studies, most of which have never benefited AI-AN groups, tribes, or communities—and have instead occasionally been used to cast the AI-AN population in a negative light. Among the hundreds of individuals we met with during listening sessions, there was a strong commitment to learning from research and applying what is learned to further help young AI-AN children. The lengthy list of candidate research topics they generated is evidence of the breadth of their interest; the thoughtful reflections they offered about improving circumstances for the next generation is evidence of its intensity.

For studies involving original data collection, geographic location and transportation challenges must be considered. Some AI-AN programs are found in the nation's most remote areas, with very limited access to roads, telephones, Internet connections, and other basic services researchers may need to rely on. Researchers planning to conduct observations at a Head Start center may arrive there only to find the building closed because a heavy storm knocked down power lines or the one licensed bus driver is ill.

The history of all that has gone before in the American Indian and Alaska Native populations will probably affect research. Although Indian hospitality is legendary, there is also a degree of suspicion attached to outsiders conducting research studies. Some AI-AN individuals will certainly be skeptical about the likelihood of benefits to their communities, and they can point to generations of broken treaties, attempts to eradicate culture and language, and empty promises as justification for their doubts. At a more personal level, researchers will need to be aware of dynamics between tribal communities, the nature of alliances among members in a given community, and family relationships that may affect the design and implementation of research activities.

The very nature of AI-AN Head Start programs will probably affect research studies. As shown earlier in this report, they are different from other Head Start programs. The uniqueness of tribal communities may suggest that drawing a representative sample from AI-AN programs is not a valid consideration. Questions about the cultural appropriateness of standardized instruments may inhibit their use. Enrollments may be smaller, affecting sample sizes. Turnover among directors and staff may be relatively frequent, affecting established relationships and approved research plans. Based on some comments we heard, it is possible that some study participants may need to be compensated, which raises concern about the perception of coercion to participate in studies.

The sixth theme—**establishing and following appropriate dissemination mechanisms**—was first mentioned by the consultant panel, then reinforced in many listening sessions. Efforts to conduct research in AI-AN Head Start programs should carefully consider the way their findings will be shared. Communities also may be wary of what results are disseminated outside the tribe and fearful that they or their children might be harmed by research results; inclusion of tribal members in what will be disseminated, as well as the methods of dissemination, needs to be a part of any research plan.

Dissemination of results to the participating communities should be carefully planned. The kind of research typically conducted in early childhood programs often results in articles published in peer-reviewed journals or reports prepared for funding agencies. Findings may be distributed through these extremely important venues, but those venues are not readily or frequently available to the target population. For future research involving AI-AN children, listening session participants suggested researchers consider alternative ways

of sharing findings, such as through community meetings, videos, and other multimedia presentations. These methods would allow the tribal community to have immediate access to findings and use relevant information to help their children achieve.

The seventh and final theme concerns the need to develop a **forum for discussion and information sharing** to facilitate the development of research that is consistent with tribal norms, values, and preferences. Typical social science research methods may not be seen as a good fit with tribal Head Start programs. For instance, researchers may encounter substantial resistance to experimental designs involving random assignment (or even a quasi-experimental design involving comparison groups) because of the moral aversion to being subjects of yet another "experiment."

Moreover, the dominant precept of contemporary social science research—independent, objective methods that produce scientifically valid results—may be inconsistent with tribal norms. One respected leader reflected the consensus of the group when he said, "There's a lot of research out there, and a lot going on. But it's all 'scientific.' Humanness is not a factor any more in this research. We could support research, but it has to have feelings in both the design and resultant statistics."

Although we found an overwhelming interest in research to benefit young AI-AN children, we sense that non-intrusive work (such as studies that use extant data) would be preferred, and that communities may be resistant to testing interventions (such as new curricula or instructional methods), filling out forms, completing surveys, being observed, and having indicators measured, particularly if these proce-dures are not developed with full participation from AI-AN individuals and if there has not been a participatory process in making decisions about their appropriateness and usefulness. To be sure, people we met throughout this study strongly support research that will produce findings to benefit young AI-AN children—but they would probably be hesitant to support research that appears to "experiment" with an approach or otherwise change, affect, or intrude on the usual way of doing business.

A forum for discussion could help assure participants of the potential benefits to be gained from research while concurrently drawing ideas from the affected community to ensure no adverse consequences for study participants. For example, if a program wanted to measure the relative effectiveness of a curriculum, a "good" social science

approach would call for classes to be randomly assigned to receive the new curriculum or not. If this approach is not acceptable to the community, reasons could be identified and addressed. If the objection is that some children would get something special and others would not, perhaps an alternate approach could be developed that would test two curricula, with classes randomly assigned to receive one or the other.

The sites we visited have only limited experience with research, so any effort the federal government sponsors would benefit from incorporating time and plans to perform educational functions about studies, to establish transparent research procedures, to gain community support, to build capacity within native communities to contribute to their own research, and to respect tribal standards and requirements.

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**References**

# Appendix Supplementary Exhibits

| Exhibit A 1 Screening and Assessment Tools and Practices Used in AI AN Programs | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| screening | number of programs | assessment | number of programs |
| AcuScreen | 4 | AcuScreen | 2 |
| Ages and Stages | 6 | Ages and Stages | 2 |
| Battelle | 2 | anecdotes | 34 |
| Brigance | 29 | Brigance | 5 |
| CDR | 1 | Creative Curriculum | 23 |
| CIP | 1 | DIAL | 3 |
| Child Profile | 1 | Fluharty | 1 |
| Creative Curriculum | 3 | ECERS | 1 |
| DECA | 1 | Galileo | 5 |
| Denver | 20 | HighReach | 9 |
| Devereaux | 2 | High/Scope | 4 |
| DIAL | 75 | Humanics | 2 |
| Early Screening Inventory | 3 | LAP | 4 |
| ECERS | 1 | Letter People | 2 |
| FirstStep | 1 | MAP | 2 |
| Fluharty | 1 | MCDI | 1 |
| HighReach | 1 | observations | 13 |
| Humanics | 2 | Pikuni Early Assessment | 1 |
| Lollipop Test | 1 | Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test | 1 |
| MAP | 1 | Portage | 5 |
| MCDI | 1 | Self-Assessment Validation Instrument | 1 |
| Portage | 1 | state or local school district process/tool | 4 |
| state or local school district process/tool | 4 | student portfolios | 2 |
| developed own system | 2 | none currently | 8 |
| | | developed own system | 16 |

Notes:
All AI-AN programs were contacted early in 2002 and asked about their current practices in screening and assessment, including the tools and processes used. Of 151 programs, 140 provided information. In the table above, different versions of the same test or instrument were collapsed into a single category. The numbers reported exceed the number of programs because programs reported using more than one tool or process for screening and assessment. For assessment practices, almost all programs report using some form of observations or anecdotes. If a given program reported using a checklist or tool *and* observations or anecdotes, the practice is recorded in the table under the particular checklist or tool. Only programs that use solely anecdotes or observations are counted in the categories of "anecdotes" or "observations" in the table.

**Exhibit A 2**
**Screening and Assessment Tools Used in Head Start Programs Visited for the Study**

| program | screening instruments | assessment instruments |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Brigance, Denver | none |
| 2 | LAT | various |
| 3 | Brigance | Developmental Continuum |
| 4 | Brigance, Child Behavioral Checklist | student portfolio |
| 5 | Creative Curriculum | Developmental Continuum |
| 6 | Brigance | observations, anecdotes |
| 7 | Creative Curriculum | Developmental Continuum |
| 8 | observation | Brigance |
| 9 | Dial R | High Reach |
| 10 | Dial III | student portfolio |
| 11 | Various | observations, anecdotes (in process of adopting Galileo) |
| 12 | Dial III, supplemental observations | observations in various developmental areas |
| 13 | Dial III | planning to use Developmental Continuum |
| 14 | Early Screening Inventory System | observations, anecdotes |
| 15 | performed by other agency | Child Progress and Planning Report |
| 16 | Brigance | Brigance |
| 17 | Brigance | Developmental Continuum |
| 18 | Dial III | observations, anecdotes, work |

**Exhibit A 3**
**Goal and Aspirations for Education**

| program | basic academic skills | | | "soft" school skills | | | access to educational resources | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x |
| 2 | x | x | | | x | | x | x | x |
| 3 | x | x | x | x | | | | x | x |
| 4 | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 5 | x | | x | x | | | x | | |
| 6 | x | | x | x | x | | x | x | |
| 7 | | x | x | | x | | | | |
| 8 | x | x | x | | | x | | x | x |
| 9 | x | x | x | | | x | x | | |
| 10 | x | x | | | x | | x | x | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | | x | x | | | |
| 13 | x | x | | x | | | | x | |
| 14 | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 15 | | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 16 | | x | | | x | x | x | x | x |
| 17 | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| 18 | x | x | | x | | | | x | |

**Exhibit A 4**
**Goals and Aspirations:  Good Employment Opportunities**

| program | parents | staff | leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 | x |  | x |
| 3 |  |  |  |
| 4 |  | x | x |
| 5 |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |
| 7 |  | x |  |
| 8 |  | x | x |
| 9 |  |  |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |
| 11 | x | x |  |
| 12 |  | x | x |
| 13 |  |  |  |
| 14 |  |  |  |
| 15 |  |  |  |
| 16 |  |  |  |
| 17 |  |  |  |
| 18 | x |  |  |

**Exhibit A 5**
**Goals and Aspirations:  Tribal Identity and Culture**

| program | native language skills | | | pride in native identity | | | preservation of native cultural practices and traditions | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | x |  | x | x |  | x | x |
| 2 | x | x | x |  | x | x | x | x | x |
| 3 | x |  | x | x | x |  |  |  | x |
| 4 | x |  | x | x | x | x | x |  | x |
| 5 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |  | x |
| 6 | x |  | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| 7 |  | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| 8 | x | x |  | x | x |  | x | x | x |
| 9 | x | x | x | x | x | x |  | x |  |
| 10 | x | x |  | x | x |  | x |  |  |
| 11 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| 12 | x | x | x |  | x | x |  |  | x |
| 13 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| 14 |  | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| 15 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| 16 |  | x | x |  | x | x |  |  | x |
| 17 | x |  | x |  | x | x | x | x | x |
| 18 | x | x |  | x | x |  | x |  |  |

**Exhibit A 6**
**Goals and Aspirations:  Respect for Diversity**

| program | parents | staff | leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |  | x |  |
| 2 | x |  |  |
| 3 | x | x | x |
| 4 | x |  |  |
| 5 | x |  | x |
| 6 |  |  |  |
| 7 |  | x |  |
| 8 | x |  |  |
| 9 |  | x |  |
| 10 | x | x |  |
| 11 | x | x |  |
| 12 | x | x | x |
| 13 |  |  |  |
| 14 | x |  |  |
| 15 |  |  |  |
| 16 | x |  | x |
| 17 | x | x |  |
| 18 |  |  |  |

**Exhibit A 7**
**Goal and Aspirations:  Health Status and Health Care**

| program | positive health outcomes | | | access to health care resources | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | x |  |  | x |
| 2 | x | x |  |  | x |  |
| 3 | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| 4 | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| 5 |  |  | x |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  | x | x | x | x |
| 7 |  |  | x |  |  | x |
| 8 | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| 9 | x | x | x |  | x |  |
| 10 |  | x |  | x |  |  |
| 11 | x | x |  | x | x |  |
| 12 |  | x | x | x | x |  |
| 13 | x | x | x |  | x |  |
| 14 |  | x |  |  | x |  |
| 15 |  |  | x | x |  | x |
| 16 |  |  | x |  |  | x |
| 17 | x | x | x | x |  | x |
| 18 |  | x |  | x |  |  |

**Exhibit A 8**
**Goals and Aspirations:  Social and Personal Growth**

| program | self-esteem | | | social and life skills | | | respect | | | personal responsibility | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | x |
| 2 | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | x |
| 3 | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| 4 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| 5 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | |
| 6 | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | |
| 7 | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | | x | | |
| 8 | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | x | | | x |
| 9 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | |
| 10 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| 13 | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | |
| 14 | | | x | | x | x | x | | x | | | |
| 15 | | | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | | |
| 16 | | x | | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | |
| 17 | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| 18 | x | x | | x | | | x | x | | x | | |

**Exhibit A 9**
**Goal and Aspirations:  Societal Considerations**

| program | contributing to society and the tribal community | | | confronting prejudice and racism | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | x | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | x | | | | | |
| 4 | | | x | x | | |
| 5 | x | x | | | x | x |
| 6 | | | x | | | |
| 7 | | | x | | x | x |
| 8 | x | | x | x | | |
| 9 | x | | x | | | |
| 10 | x | | | x | | x |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | | | | |
| 13 | | | | x | | |
| 14 | | | x | | | x |
| 15 | | | | | | x |
| 16 | | x | | | | x |
| 17 | | | | x | | |
| 18 | x | | | x | | |

**Exhibit A 10**
**Goal and Aspirations:  Home and Family Life**

| program | parent involvement | | | safety and stability | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | x | x | x |
| 2 | | x | | x | x | x |
| 3 | | x | | | x | x |
| 4 | | x | x | | x | |
| 5 | x | | x | | | x |
| 6 | x | x | x | x | | |
| 7 | | x | | | x | |
| 8 | x | | x | | x | |
| 9 | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 10 | | x | x | x | x | |
| 11 | x | x | | | | |
| 12 | x | x | x | x | x | |
| 13 | | | x | | x | x |
| 14 | x | x | x | | x | |
| 15 | | x | | | | |
| 16 | | x | | | | |
| 17 | x | x | | | x | |
| 18 | x | | | | | |

**Exhibit A 11**
**Head Start Contributions to Achieving Goals and Aspirations:  Education**

| program | teaching native language, cultural practices and traditions | | | teaching social skills | | | building basic academic skills | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | x | | | x | x | |
| 2 | | x | | x | x | | x | x | |
| 3 | | | x | x | | x | | | x |
| 4 | | | | x | x | x | | x | |
| 5 | | x | | | x | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | x | x | |
| 7 | | x | x | x | | x | x | | x |
| 8 | | x | | | | | x | x | x |
| 9 | | | | x | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | x | x | | | x | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 13 | x | x | | x | | x | | | |
| 14 | | | | | x | | | x | |
| 15 | | | x | | x | x | | | |
| 16 | | x | x | | x | | | x | |
| 17 | | x | | x | | | | | |
| 18 | x | | | x | x | | | x | |

## Exhibit A 12
### Head Start Contributions to Achieving Goals and Aspirations:  Health Outcomes

| program | health care screenings and services | | | nutritious meals | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | | | | | |
| 2 | | x | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | x |
| 4 | | | | | x | |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | x | x | |
| 7 | x | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | x | |
| 9 | | | | | | |
| 10 | x | x | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | | x | | | x | x |
| 13 | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | x | | | |
| 15 | | | | x | | |
| 16 | | x | x | | | x |
| 17 | | | x | | | |
| 18 | x | | | | x | |

## Exhibit A 13
### Head Start Contributions to Achieving Goals and Aspirations:  Family Well-Being

| program | encourage parent and community involvement | | | meet human service needs of families | | | provide parents with opportunities for economic, educational and personal growth | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 2 | x | x | x | x | | | | | x |
| 3 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | x | | | x | | x | x | |
| 5 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 6 | x | x | | | x | | | | |
| 7 | | | x | | | | | x | |
| 8 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | x | | | x | | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | | | x | | | | x |
| 13 | x | x | | | | | x | x | |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| 16 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 17 | x | | | x | | | | | |
| 18 | x | | | | | | | | |

**Exhibit A 14**
**Head Start Contributions to Achieving Goals and Aspirations:  Children s Personal and Emotional Development**

| program | build self esteem and independence | | | foster love of learning | | | identify and address developmental needs | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | | | | x | | | | |
| 2 | | x | | | | | | x | |
| 3 | | | | x | | | | | |
| 4 | x | | | x | | | | x | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | x | |
| 7 | | | x | | | | | | x |
| 8 | | | | | x | | x | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | x | | | x | x | x |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | | | | |
| 12 | x | x | x | x | | | | x | |
| 13 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | x | | | |
| 15 | | | | | x | | | | x |
| 16 | | | x | | | | | x | |
| 17 | | | | | x | | | | x |
| 18 | x | | | x | | | x | | |

**Exhibit A 15**
**Areas for Continued Growth in Head Start:  Parent and Family Well Being**

| program | increase parent involvement | | | improve awareness, literacy, education levels | | | address social, economic, family circumstances | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | x | | | x | x | |
| 2 | x | x | | | x | | | x | |
| 3 | | x | | | x | | | | |
| 4 | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x |
| 5 | x | | x | x | | | x | | x |
| 6 | x | | | | x | | | x | |
| 7 | x | | x | x | | x | | | |
| 8 | x | x | | | x | | | x | |
| 9 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 10 | x | x | | | x | | x | x | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | |
| 13 | x | x | | | x | | x | | |
| 14 | | | x | | x | | | | x |
| 15 | x | x | | | | | x | | x |
| 16 | | x | | | | x | | x | x |
| 17 | x | | | | | | | | x |
| 18 | x | | | | | | x | | |

**Exhibit A 16**
**Areas for Continued Growth in Head Start:  Child Well Being**

| program | address AI-AN children's special developmental needs | | | build children's native language and cultural knowledge | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | | | |
| 2 | x | x | x | | x | |
| 3 | | x | x | | | |
| 4 | | x | x | | | x |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | x | |
| 8 | x | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | x | x | |
| 10 | | | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | | x | x | |
| 13 | x | x | | x | | |
| 14 | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | x | | | |
| 16 | x | | | | x | |
| 17 | | x | | | x | x |
| 18 | | | | | | |

**Exhibit A 17**
**Areas for Continued Growth in Head Start:  Head Start Operations**

| program | foster improved communication | | | track children's needs, progress, and outcomes | | | manage paperwork | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | x | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | x | x | | | | | |
| 3 | | x | x | | | | | x | |
| 4 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | x | | | x | | | x | |
| 6 | | x | x | | | | | | |
| 7 | | x | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | x | x | | x | | | x | |
| 9 | x | | | | | | | x | |
| 10 | x | x | | | x | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | | x | | | x | |
| 13 | x | x | | | x | | | x | |
| 14 | | | x | | | | | | |
| 15 | | x | x | | | | | x | |
| 16 | | x | | | x | | | | |
| 17 | x | | x | | | | | x | |
| 18 | | x | | | | | | | |

**Exhibit A 18**
**Recommended Research Topic:  Role of Head Start in Native Language Skills Development**

| program | parents | staff | leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | x | |
| 2 | x | x | x |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | x | |
| 5 | | | x |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | x | | |
| 9 | | | x |
| 10 | x | | |
| 11 | x | x | |
| 12 | | x | x |
| 13 | | | |
| 14 | | | x |
| 15 | | | x |
| 16 | | | |
| 17 | | x | x |
| 18 | | | |

**Exhibit A 19**
**Recommended Research Topics:  Cultural and Tribal Identity**

| program | role of Head Start in fostering tribal identity, pride and cultural knowledge | | | challenges in balancing native identity with life in non-Indian institutions and settings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | x | | | |
| 2 | x | x | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | x | x | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | x | |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | x | | | | |
| 8 | | | x | | | |
| 9 | x | | | | | |
| 10 | x | | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | x |
| 14 | | x | | | | |
| 15 | | | x | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | |
| 17 | | x | | | | |
| 18 | x | | | x | | |

**Exhibit A 20**
**Recommended Research Topics: Long-Term Education Outcomes**

| program | long-term educational outcomes for AI-AN children who attend Head Start vs. AI-AN children who do not | | | long-term educational outcomes for Head Start children who attend AI-AN vs. non-Indian programs | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | | x | x |
| 2 | | | | | | x |
| 3 | | | x | | | |
| 4 | | x | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | x | |
| 6 | | | x | | | |
| 7 | | x | x | | | |
| 8 | | | x | | | |
| 9 | | | | | x | |
| 10 | | | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | |
| 12 | | x | x | x | x | x |
| 13 | x | x | x | | | x |
| 14 | | x | x | | | |
| 15 | x | x | x | | | |
| 16 | x | x | | x | | |
| 17 | | x | x | | x | |
| 18 | x | | x | | | |

**Exhibit A 21**
**Recommended Research Topic: School Readiness of Head Start Children**

| program | school readiness of Head Start children | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | x | |
| 2 | x | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | x | | x |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | x |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | x | |
| 9 | x | | |
| 10 | x | x | |
| 11 | x | x | x |
| 12 | x | x | |
| 13 | x | | |
| 14 | | | x |
| 15 | | | x |
| 16 | | | |
| 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | x |

**Exhibit A 22**
**Recommended Research Topic:  Learning Styles of AI AN Children**

| program | parents | staff | leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | x | |
| 3 | | x | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | x | x | x |
| 8 | | | |
| 9 | | x | |
| 10 | | | |
| 11 | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | |
| 13 | | | |
| 14 | | x | |
| 15 | | | x |
| 16 | | x | |
| 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | |

**Exhibit A 23**
**Recommended Research Topics:  Communication Strategies**

| program | effective communication between Head Start staff and tribal leaders | | | effective communication with parents | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | | | x | | |
| 2 | | | | x | | |
| 3 | | x | | | | |
| 4 | | x | x | x | x | |
| 5 | | | | | x | |
| 6 | | | | x | x | x |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | x | x | x | |
| 10 | | x | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | x | x | x | |
| 13 | | | | | x | |
| 14 | | | x | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | x | | |
| 18 | | | | | | |

**Exhibit A 24**
**Recommended Research Topics:  Validity and Cultural Appropriateness of Screening and Assessment Tools for AI AN Children**

| program | parents | staff | leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |  | x |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |
| 5 | x |  | x |
| 6 |  |  | x |
| 7 |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |
| 9 |  | x |  |
| 10 |  |  |  |
| 11 | x | x | x |
| 12 | x | x |  |
| 13 | x | x |  |
| 14 |  | x |  |
| 15 |  |  | x |
| 16 |  |  |  |
| 17 |  |  | x |
| 18 |  |  |  |

**Exhibit A 25**
**Recommended Research Topics:  Social and Emotional Development**

| program | strategies for managing behavior issues in Head Start classrooms | | | success of Head Start in teaching social skills | | | role of Head Start in fostering self-esteem and confidence | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  | x | x | x |  | x |  |
| 3 |  | x |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |
| 4 |  |  |  | x | x |  |  |  |  |
| 5 | x |  |  |  | x |  |  | x |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |  | x |
| 9 |  |  | x | x |  |  | x |  |  |
| 10 | x |  |  | x | x |  |  |  |  |
| 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12 | x |  |  | x | x | x |  |  |  |
| 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17 |  |  |  |  |  | x |  | x |  |
| 18 | x | x |  | x | x |  |  |  |  |

**Exhibit A 26**
**Recommended Research Topics:  Health Status and Health Care**

| program | prevalence of health problems/overall health outcomes of AI-AN children | | | access to and quality of health services available to Head Start families | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | x | x | |
| 2 | x | x | x | | | |
| 3 | | x | | | | |
| 4 | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 5 | x | | | x | | |
| 6 | | | x | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | x | | |
| 9 | x | x | x | | | x |
| 10 | | | | x | x | x |
| 11 | x | x | | | | |
| 12 | x | x | | | x | x |
| 13 | x | | | | | |
| 14 | | x | | | x | |
| 15 | | x | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | |
| 17 | x | x | | | x | x |
| 18 | x | x | | | | |

**Exhibit A 27**
**Recommended Research Topics:  Positive and Preventive Health**

| program | promoting sports and physical activity | | | nutrition | | | preventing health problems | | | reinforcing positive health practices at home | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | x | | | | | | x | | | | x | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | x | | | x | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | x | | | |
| 4 | | | | x | | | | | | | x | |
| 5 | | | | | | | x | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | x | | x | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | x | x | | | x | | |
| 10 | x | | | x | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | x | x | | x | x | x | | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 13 | | | | x | | | x | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | | | x | |
| 15 | | | | | | | | x | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | x | | | x | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | x | x | | x | | | x | |
| 18 | | | | | | | x | | | | | |

| Exhibit A 28 — Recommended Research Topics: Special Needs | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | prevalence of learning disabilities | | | unique characteristics and learning needs of AI-AN children with special needs | | | effective methods for identifying and addressing developmental issues | | |
| program | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | | | | | | x | x | x |
| 2 | | x | | | | x | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | x | | | |
| 4 | x | | x | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | x | | x | x | | x | x |
| 7 | | x | | | | | | x | |
| 8 | | | | | | | | x | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | x | |
| 10 | | x | | | x | | x | x | |
| 11 | | | x | | | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | | x | | x | x | | |
| 13 | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | | | | x |
| 15 | | x | x | | | x | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | x | | | | | | |
| 18 | | | | | | | | | |

| Exhibit A 29 — Recommended Research Topics: Effects of Teacher Education, Qualifications, and Experience | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| program | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | x | x |
| 9 | x | | x |
| 10 | x | x | |
| 11 | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | |
| 13 | | x | x |
| 14 | | | x |
| 15 | | | |
| 16 | | | |
| 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | |

## Exhibit A 30
## Recommended Research Topics:  Strategies for More Access to Training and Professional Development Opportunities

| program | parents | staff | leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | x | x | x |
| 2 | | x | |
| 3 | | x | |
| 4 | | x | x |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | x | x |
| 7 | x | x | |
| 8 | | x | |
| 9 | x | x | x |
| 10 | x | x | |
| 11 | | | |
| 12 | x | x | x |
| 13 | | x | |
| 14 | | x | |
| 15 | | | |
| 16 | | x | |
| 17 | | x | |
| 18 | x | x | |

## Exhibit A 31
## Recommended Research Topics:  Parent Involvement

| program | effects of parent involvement on children's educational outcomes, causes of low parent involvement | | | ways to increase parent involvement in children's social, emotional, and academic development | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | | | x | x | x |
| 2 | | x | | x | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | x | | | x | | x |
| 5 | | | | | x | |
| 6 | | | | | x | x |
| 7 | | x | x | | | |
| 8 | | | | | | |
| 9 | | x | | x | x | |
| 10 | | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | x | x | |
| 12 | x | x | x | | x | x |
| 13 | | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | | | |
| 15 | | | | | | |
| 16 | | x | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | x | x |
| 18 | | | | x | | x |

| Exhibit A 32 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recommended Research Topics: Parent Education** | | | | | | |
| | strategies for educating parents about child development, nutrition, and health | | | Head Start's role in promoting adult education and literacy | | |
| program | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | | | |
| 2 | x | x | | | | |
| 3 | | | x | | | |
| 4 | | x | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | | x | x | | | x |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | x | | | | |
| 9 | x | x | | x | | |
| 10 | | | | | x | |
| 11 | x | x | | | | |
| 12 | x | x | x | | | x |
| 13 | | | | | x | |
| 14 | | x | | | | x |
| 15 | x | | | x | | |
| 16 | | | | | | |
| 17 | x | x | | | | |
| 18 | x | x | | | | |

| Exhibit A 33 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recommended Research Topics: Family Structure and Dynamics** | | | | | | |
| | effects of family structure on Head Start children | | | effects of parent and adult drug and alcohol abuse on Head Start children | | |
| program | parents | staff | leaders | parents | staff | leaders |
| 1 | | x | | | | x |
| 2 | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | x | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | x |
| 6 | | | | | | |
| 7 | | | | | | |
| 8 | | x | x | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | |
| 10 | | x | | | | |
| 11 | | | | x | x | |
| 12 | | x | | | x | |
| 13 | | x | | | x | |
| 14 | | | | | x | |
| 15 | | | | | | |
| 16 | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | x | |
| 18 | | x | | | | |

| Exhibit A 34 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Recommendations for Ensuring Cultural Sensitivity in Research Projects** | | | |
| program | avoid stereotypes, assumptions, or generalizations about tribal communities | demonstrate respect and sensitivity toward local culture and values | exercise sensitivity and care in how research findings are interpreted and used |
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | x | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | x | x | |
| 5 | | x | x |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | | | |
| 8 | | | x |
| 9 | x | x | |
| 10 | | x | x |
| 11 | | | x |
| 12 | x | x | x |
| 13 | | x | x |
| 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | |
| 16 | | | x |
| 17 | | | |
| 18 | x | x | |

| Exhibit A 35 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Recommendations for Composition of Research Teams** | | |
| program | include American Indians (in general) on research teams | include local tribal members on research teams |
| 1 | | x |
| 2 | x | x |
| 3 | | |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | x | |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | x | x |
| 8 | | x |
| 9 | x | |
| 10 | | |
| 11 | x | x |
| 12 | x | |
| 13 | | x |
| 14 | | |
| 15 | x | x |
| 16 | | |
| 17 | | |
| 18 | | |