CULTURALLY COMPETENT DATA COLLECTION & CLIENT INTERACTION



Guidance for Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS)

Accurate data collection for race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation is critical in HIV, HCV, and STI surveillance. For American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities, small population size means even a few cases can represent a significant impact. Misclassification or underreporting can erase these impacts entirely. Disease Intervention Specialists play a key role in ensuring AI/AN data are accurate, respectful, and meaningful so the numbers truly reflect the communities they represent.

DO'S

- Recognize diversity: Any client you serve could identify as AI/AN, regardless of appearance, residence, or the tribal status of family members.
- Ask directly, respectfully: Always verbally inquire about race, Hispanic origin, and tribal affiliation.
- Have reference definitions ready: Keep clear definitions of race and ethnicity categories for easy explanation.
- Collect racial and tribal data yourself: Ensure information is accurate by collecting it firsthand rather than relying on other sources.
- Prepare for questions: Be ready to explain why this information is collected, e.g., for surveillance, reporting, or ensuring culturally appropriate services.
- Manage discomfort: Be aware that questions about race and tribal affiliation may be sensitive. Learn how to manage your own discomfort and respond professionally.
- Observe non-verbal cues: Pay attention to body language and tone to body language and tone to gauge comfort or confusion.
- Support multi-racial identification: Ensure forms and electronic systems allow for multiple races, ethnicities, and tribal affiliations.
- Include AI/AN options: Make sure all data collection tools allow clients to identify as "American Indian or Alaska Native".
- Verify data with clients: Review forms or electronic entries with the client to ensure accuracy.
- Know tribal resources: Learn how to contact tribes or tribal health organizations for support, referrals, or other services.
- Engage in continuing education: Complete trainings that include cultural competency, client communication, and proper reporting procedures.
- Practice compassion: Approach all interactions with empathy, patience, and respect for client identity.

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DONT'S

- Don't assume someone's race or ethnicity based on appearance.
- Don't copy racial information from other professionals' notes, medical records, or transport documents.
- Do not make them prove they are AI/AN with a CDIB, or Tribal ID.
- Don't ignore the lessons and best practices from trainings you've completed.
- Don't respond with hostility, frustration, or other negative emotions, even if challenged.
- Don't skip reviewing your work for accuracy.

Training for Racial Misclassification

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Native Test | Controlling Epidemics by Designing Accessible Responses (CEDAR) | HIV & STI Initiatives

Adapted from Preventing Racial Misclassification on Death Certificates: Dos and Don'ts for Funeral Directors (NationalCouncil of Urban Indian Health, n.d.). Retrieved from https://ncuih.org/wp-content/uploads/ Preventing-Racial-Misclassification-on-Death-Certificates-Dos-and-Donts-for-Funeral-Directors.pdf