Louisiana Native American Indian Tribes

Cultural Competency Needs and Potential Challenges

January 2016
Objectives

1. The learner will be able to name 3 of the 8 Federal and State recognized tribes that are found in the state of Louisiana.

2. The learner will identify two serious behavioral health needs.

3. The learner will be able to state how historical trauma may impact current mental health needs and be a barrier to treatment.

4. The learner will name two strengths commonly found in Native American families/communities that can be leveraged for effective mental health treatment.

5. The learner will identify one way their agency or practice might change to better serve their Native American clients.
There are 8 tribes recognized in Louisiana.

1. Adais Caddo Tribe (Robeline, LA)
2. Biloxi Chitimacha Confederation (3 bands) - Bayou Lafourche Band (Zachary, LA), Isle de Jean Charles Band (Montegut, LA), Grand Caillou/Dulac Band (Bourg, LA)
3. Clifton Choctaw (Clifton, LA)
4. Choctaw-Apache Tribe of Ebarb (Zwolle, LA)
5. Four Winds Cherokee (Leesville, LA)
6. Louisiana Band of Choctaw (Greenwell Springs, LA)
7. Pointe-Au-Chien Tribe (Montegut, LA)
8. United Houma Nation (Golden Meadow, LA)

State Recognized Tribes in Louisiana:
Current Federally Recognized Indian Tribes in Louisiana

• The four federally recognized Indian tribes are:
  - Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana
  - Jena Band of Choctaw Indians
  - Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
  - Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe of Louisiana

Federally Recognized Tribes in Louisiana:
Map of Native American Tribes in Louisiana
Native American Tribes of Louisiana, www.native-languages.org/louisiana
Jena Band of Choctaw Indians

• The Choctaw are thought to have inhabited parts of Louisiana along the Pascagoula and Pearl Rivers from the early 1700s.
• The present day Choctaw are primarily located between Monroe and Natchitoches in the parishes of Catahoula, LaSalle, and Grant.
• The Jena Band of Choctaw Indians received federal recognition through the federal acknowledgement process in 1995. The Tribal membership is estimated at 327.
• The Tribal Government consists of the Chief and 4 Council members.
• The Jena Choctaw opened a gaming resort in early 2013. The proceeds are earmarked for unmet needs in housing, education, and health care.
• Services related to Health, Social Services, Housing, and Transportation are available to tribal members.

www.jenachoctaw.org
Chitimacha

- The sovereign nation of Chitimacha once covered 1/3 of Louisiana and have been in Louisiana for centuries. The current reservation is near Charenton.
- Current members of the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana total approximately 1300.
- The Tribe is governed by a Council of five elected officials, including Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer, and two Councilman-at-Large.
- Health and Social Services are provided through the Louisiana Department of Health and Human Services.
- The Chitimacha run the Cypress Bayou Casino, with the proceeds used for housing developments, tribal school, and college scholarship programs.

http://chitamacha.gov
Coushatta

- The Coushatta, aligned with Alabama, were forced into and through Louisiana in the 1760’s, with those that did not continue to Texas settling in the area now known as Kinder.
- The Coushatta tribe received official Federal recognition in 1973 and established its present home in Elton.
- The current Coushatta tribe enrollment is 875.
- The Coushatta Tribe is governed by elected council.
- The Coushatta Casino resort is Louisiana’s largest land-based gaming enterprise. The proceeds are used to assist the members with health, housing, educational and social programs.

www.koasatiheritage.org
**Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana**

- Tunica’s main settlement has remained in Marksville since the 1780’s. Following a negative court ruling regarding land, the Tunica merged with several other historical Louisiana tribes to pool resources.

- The Tunica finally received federal recognition in 1981. Descendants of Ofo, Avoyel and Choctaw are included in the tribe. The ‘Tunica Treasure’, which included thousands of excavated artifacts, was returned to the tribe in 1989 and the collection (80% of the original artifacts) is now housed in the Tunica-Biloxi Cultural and Educational Resources Center.

- There are estimated to be 1200 members of the tribe, with 100 residing on the Tunica-Biloxi reservation.

- The Tunica-Biloxi are governed by a Council of six elected members.

- The Tunica built the 1st land-based casino in LA, now known as the Paragon Casino resort, which is the largest employer in Avoyelles Parish with 1780 employees. 98% of the casino employees are non-Tunica from the community.

- The Tunica administration includes departments for health, housing, and social services among others.

[www.tunica.org](http://www.tunica.org)
United Houma Nation

• The Houma have lived in Louisiana for over 300 years, migrating from central to southern Louisiana.

• The United Houma Nation is a state recognized tribe with approximately 17,000 members. The Houma have been fighting for Federal recognition since 1985.

• The Houma are governed within the Nation by a Principal Chief and Tribal Council, with multiple committees.
  
  o The UHN is partnered with the Association of American Indian Physicians for a Diabetes Pilot Program, a program to reduce deaths among American Indians diagnosed with Type II Diabetes.

www.unitedhoumanation.org
Mental Health Needs within the Native American Population

Suicide:
• The prevalence rate for suicide among Native Americans is 1.5 times the national rate.
• Males aged 15-24 account for two-thirds of all Native American suicides.

Homelessness:
• Native Americans are over-represented among people who are homeless. While representing less than 2% of the U.S. population, it is estimated that Native Americans constitute 8% of homeless Americans.
• The homeless are at significant risk of mental illness.

NAMI, American Indian and Alaska Natives Communities Mental Health Facts, www2.nami.org
http://americanindianhealth.nim.nih.gov/mental-health
Mental Health Needs: PTSD

- 22% of American Indian/Native American children have PTSD.
  - *American Indian children experience PTSD at the same rate as veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.*

The 257 page 2014 Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence report *Ending Violence so Children Can Thrive* states in the introductory letter from the Co-Chairs:

“Today, a vast majority of American Indian and Alaska Native children live in communities with alarmingly high rates of poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, alcoholism, suicide, and victimization. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse are widespread. Continual exposure to violence has a devastating impact on child development and can have a lasting impact on basic cognitive, emotional, and neurological functions....Over the course of several months this Advisory Committee listened to hours of testimony about the trauma and suffering endured by our Native people—past and present.

We heard story after story of abuse, loss, and tragedy. We heard about the legacy of historical trauma caused by loss of home, land, culture, and language and the subsequent abuse of generations of Native children in American boarding schools. We heard that, through a tragic history of broken promises and chronic underfunding, our country has failed to meet its trust obligations to Native Americans and their children.

Yet at every hearing we also heard about the desire for healing and the importance of restoring traditional ceremonies and ancestral wisdom as ways of returning safety, dignity, respect, and well-being to our Indigenous people and their children. We discovered a remarkable core of resilience and love of children among Native people and a sense of urgency about changing their communities.

Throughout the testimony, we also heard stories of critical tribal funding that has been cut across sectors—housing, law enforcement, child welfare, juvenile justice, health care, and education—and how the lack of funding negatively impacts the children in those communities.”

Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on American Indian/Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence: *Ending Violence so Children Can Thrive*, November 18, 2014 www.justice.gov
Mental Health Needs:
Alcohol/Substance Use

• SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health publishes that 17.5% of American Indians between 2003-2011 were identified in need of treatment for Alcohol or Substance Use issues.

• In that same year (2012) SAMHSA’s Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality identified that half the admissions into Adult Substance Abuse Treatment during 2010 came through referral by the Criminal Justice System.

Need for and Receipt of Substance Use Treatment among American Indians or Alaska Natives, NSDUH, SAMSHA 2012
Native Americans and Mental Health: Underutilization

• Compared to the general population, American Indian individuals tend to underutilize mental health services.

• Reasons for this are complex, but include
  o Lack of access to culturally integrated services
  o Lack of Native American mental health professionals
  o Distrust of government related services

**Strengths in Native American Communities and Families**

Many strengths have been noted in Native American families and tribes:

- Extended family and kinship ties
- Strong sense of collective community responsibility
- History of survival and resilience
- Indigenous generational knowledge/wisdom
- Community pride

Barriers to Mental Health Treatment for Native American populations
Lack of Research

• While only 8% of clinical trial participants prior to 2005 were minorities, Native Americans have generally been almost entirely left out of research studies related to mental health treatment and psychotropic medication efficacy.

• When researchers at UCLA and other university psychology/psychiatry departments took a look at the state of psychological treatment for ethnic minorities they found that in the studies conducted between 1986 and 2005, none of the 10,000 participants in randomized clinical trials for major mental disorders were American Indian/Alaskan Native.

Recent Historical Trauma

• Federal ‘relocation’ in the 1950’s and 60’s moved Indians to cities with promises of jobs and housing that never materialized and isolated them from family and community.

• The forced removal of children by child welfare and government went on at a high rate (35% of foster children were American Indian) and widespread involuntary adoption of Indian children to non-Indian families continued through the 1970’s until the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act.

• Until 1978, when Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act to end "a pattern of discrimination against American Indians," an estimated 25% to 30% of Native American children had been removed from their families. By 1999, Native American children accounted for only 1% of children in foster care.
  
  o Unfortunately, demeaning and destructive experiences for American Indians are very much still within memory. Unreasonable punishment, physical and sexual abuse, and death from infectious diseases were rampant in the ‘boarding schools’ where many of the Native American children were sent when removed from their families.

Mental Health: Culture, Race and Ethnicity Supplement to the 1999 U.S. Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health
Impact of Historical Trauma

• The aforementioned historical traumas have had the effect of a general distrust of government, including Child Protective Services and health services.

• Another impact is Intergenerational and communal unresolved grief within Native American communities and families.

• Lastly, both relocation and forced removal of children has led to a spectrum of multicultural identity and varying levels of cultural connection.

Considerations for Providers of Mental Health
A Different Perspective

• Native cultures tend to be relationship-based... power-based relationships such as those between child welfare workers and clients or doctors and their patients may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

• In many Native cultures, great emphasis is placed on being in balance spiritually, emotionally, and physically or being in harmony with one’s environment (including other people). In the belief systems of some Native people, problems arise when one becomes out of balance.
Spirituality and Health Beliefs

A number of key concepts regarding the relationship of spirituality to health that are widely shared among American Indians include:

- Belief in a Supreme Creator
- Each person is composed of mind, body, and spirit
- The spirit is ongoing; existed before the body and will continue after
- Health is harmony of mind, body, and spirit;
- Illness is disharmony of mind, body, and spirit
- Each individual is responsible for his/her own health

Family

• American Indian families may frame problems and their resolution differently from those of families from the majority culture.

• Family may also be differently defined and terms used differently within Native American cultures. For example some tribal groups use the term ‘grandma’ to refer to great aunts, ‘sister’ or ‘brother’ to refer to cousins.

• The family and tribe may be very important resources in the treatment of someone with a mental health need.

Implications for Treatment Approaches

➢ *Build relationship* - It is better to go slow in the beginning than to have individuals become overwhelmed and give up completely.

➢ *Respect and incorporate* family, tribe and their perspective. Utilize alternative treatments, meaningful rituals, and community healers and elders.
Considerations for Treatment: Communication and Non-Verbal Messages

• Communicating with a different culture always requires careful and respectful observation. It is important to both respect and understand how your patient communicates, both verbally and non-verbally.
  o American Indians may look down as a show of respect or deference.
  o American Indians may consider it unacceptable to directly criticize or complain. They may have been brought up that this is disloyal. This can have strong impact on how to approach issues related to a family member.
  o American Indians may use humor and storytelling to communicate difficult and/or important messages.

WJ Richardson. Cultural Awareness to Help While Serving Native Veterans. 6/27/2012, VA office of Rural Health
Summary

A reminder that the all the dimensions of Cross Cultural competency are important to cultivate with Native American clients:

- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Empathy
- Skills
- Flexibility
- Resource Adaptation
- Workforce Diversity

And a reminder that all clients are individuals and must be evaluated and treated according to their individual presentation and needs within a culturally informed context.
**Magellan Assists with Cultural Competency**

From the Magellan Provider Handbook:

Magellan’s responsibility is to:

- Provide ongoing education to deliver competent services to people of all cultures, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and those with disabilities;
- Provide access to language assistance, including Braille for the visually impaired, and bilingual staff and interpreter services to those with limited English proficiency, during all hours of operation at no cost to the consumer;
- Provide easily understood member materials, available in the languages of the commonly encountered groups and/or groups represented in the service area;
- Provide access to TDD / TTY services for the hearing impaired;
- Monitor gaps in services and other culture-specific provider service needs. When gaps are identified, Magellan will develop a provider recruitment plan and monitor its effectiveness.

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