

## Native American Focus Group

### TITLE:

*Native Vision: A focus for Improving Behavioral Health Wellness for California Native Americans*

### RECOMMENDED INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES:

The disparity report was emailed out on January 16, 2013 to ten American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) community members whom are well connected to the local AIAN community in Fresno. It was also emailed to multiple FAIHP staff members who are themselves AIAN. While we had one community member say they planned on submitted feedback, it was not received and the meeting scheduled to discuss the report on February 13, 2013 consisted of the following people:

- Jennifer Ruiz, Executive Director of Fresno American Indian Health Project, member of the Chukchansi Tribe
- Paula Davila, Peer Support Specialist of Fresno American Indian Health Project, member of the Manchester Pomo Tribe
- Jackalyn Badoni, Community Coordinator of Fresno American Indian Health Project, member of the Cold Springs Mono Tribe

The disparity report discusses in great depth the reason why traditional modalities of behavioral health services are not successful in the American Indian Alaska Native (AI/AN) Community. In regards to thinking about recommended County strategies to properly offer behavioral health services and help improve wellness in the AI/AN community, the following report recommendations seem most relevant:

- **Do not rely solely on US Census data to inform the quantity and level of need** in the Fresno AI/AN. The report explains in detail the historical significance of why this strategy is not truly reflective of reality.
- **Continue to involve and include the AI/AN community.** This could mean having a standard liaison role on your Mental Health board that would be nominated from AI/AN community members to represent our community appropriately.
- **Meaningful Engagement of AIAN People and Tribes** – many times agreements or partnerships are formed on paper-only but actual engagement of the community does not always happen. Ensure the County is assessing a realistic view of current engagement, and actively work to ensure meaningful engagement with the community.

With current PEI funding, the County has set good precedence in contracting with Community-Based organizations (CBO) in order to deliver culturally appropriate intervention services or “Community Defined Best Practices”, as

the report describes it. Continue this practice as much as possible and work to outreach to local AI/AN organizations when opportunities become available. Furthermore, the report recommends offering continued technical assistance on these projects to ensure that administration of these projects do not overwhelm the agency administering them and will allow the agency to truly focus on the services.

The main recommended overall strategy listed in the report is to utilize community-defined practices for improving wellness, which, are all culturally-based strategies and it would be difficult for a non AI/AN provider to facilitate. Therefore, the County must either contract out additional funds to meet the need in the community or design an internal system which forces direct services providers to integrate a referral process that ties the consumers into services already happening at a CBO. (both strategies would be most successful) For example, Fresno American Indian Health Project is just one of several local AI/AN agencies in Fresno and of the 21 interventions listed, we facilitate or participate in at least 9 of them in similar fashion as to what's described (with modifications made specifically for our local AI/AN community). The report clearly describes the importance of a holistic wellness system and so if individuals are receiving direct counseling services through the County it is also crucial that they get connected with a AI/AN CBO that can offer culture-based interventions.