



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Early Childhood Development | 330 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20201
www.acf.hhs.gov/eecd

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Dear Colleagues:

On May 11, 2022, the U.S. Department of the Interior released [Volume 1](#) of the investigative report as part of the [Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative](#). This report brings to light the traumatic and unsettling practices that were carried out as part of the federal Indian boarding school system throughout the United States over the span of nearly two centuries. Specifically, the initial findings of the investigation detail ways that the federal government attempted to assimilate American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children by removing them from their families and implementing systematic policies to discourage or prevent the use of Native languages, culture, and traditional religious practices through punitive methods.

The assimilation policies carried out by the federal government have left a legacy of intergenerational trauma by forcibly separating families, which affects Native communities to this day. Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland, a member of the Laguna Pueblo, stated “the next phase of the federal government response will be to take this research to the people and find ways it can assist with healing the generational trauma it caused through racist and genocidal policy.”

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) recognizes that the impact of federal Indian boarding schools is widespread and has had long term consequences on the well-being of children and families in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. We also acknowledge the immense cross-generational resilience that defines these communities and the many Indigenous-led efforts to revive and preserve traditional practices and Native languages.

As we reflect on the process of community-wide healing, we would like to lift up those who care for young Native children and their dedication to the preservation of cultural practices and language and the promotion of emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being of children and families. ACF provides funding for Native community-led early childhood programs and initiatives, including Head Start and Early Head Start, child care, home visiting, and projects funded by the Administration for Native Americans. These programs are informed by the voices and expertise of community members and foster resilience by working with Native children and their families to provide resources and services that promote children’s learning and healthy development, support the well-being of parents and caregivers, address and prevent traumatic experiences, and integrate Native language and culture in ways that enhance learning and promote healing.

The troubling details of the federal Indian boarding school system that have emerged, and will continue to emerge, through this investigation may heighten the impact of historical trauma and leave many of us grappling with difficult emotions. At ACF, we acknowledge that many families and early childhood program staff may struggle due to historical and ongoing trauma. Below, we share trauma-informed and early childhood focused resources that may be helpful to providers, community members, tribal leaders, and families.

Thank you to all those who support children and families in Native communities every day, despite challenging circumstances, for your dedication and passion. We are honored to partner with you and look forward to supporting you in your efforts.

Sincerely,

/KH/

Katie Hamm, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development, Acting Director,
Office of Head Start

/TH/

Tala Hooban, Acting Deputy Director, Office of Head Start

/RF/

Dr. Ruth Friedman, Director, Office of Child Care

Enclosure:

Resources for Self-Care and Mental Health

[Healing Resources](#) from the [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition](#).

[Culture, Identity, and History as Sources of Strength and Resilience for Tribal Communities](#), a webinar hosted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) [Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health](#).

[Strategies for Coping and Healing](#), an online collection of resources from Head Start.

[Healing from Historical Trauma: Understanding Trauma Part 2](#), a webinar developed by SAMHSA to create education and awareness of Historical Trauma and its impact on American Indian and Alaska Native populations. Presentations on the Teca Woapiye Wicoti healing day camps for youth, the Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School, and the Pueblo Convocation are included as examples of work that is currently being done by communities to heal from historical trauma and unresolved grief.

[Painting the Path of Indigenous Resilience](#), a TEDx talk by Lisa Boivin, a member of the Deninu K’ue First Nation in Northwest Territories. She is an interdisciplinary artist and a bioethics specialist at University of Toronto. Lisa uses digital painting and image-based storytelling to bridge gaps between bioethics and aspects of Indigenous cultures and worldviews. In this talk, Lisa reflects upon her personal experience of cultural displacement by confronting the Indian residential school system, and the Sixties Scoop. She shares her story of healing through cultural reclamation (please note that parts of this talk may be distressing as they address boarding school experiences).

Resources for Well-being Promotion

[Culture Protects Us](#), a video from the [National Native Children’s Trauma Center](#) about the foundational principle of “Walking the Four Directions”—the idea that tribal cultures represent a powerful source of protection against many of the risk factors that are common among tribal youth.

[Healthy Aboriginal Network](#), an effort that promotes wellness and literacy among indigenous youth through comic books and animated short films on health and social issues.

[We R Native](#), an interactive website that offers multimedia health resources such as videos, blog posts, and a forum where Native youth can ask questions.

[Project 562](#), a national photography project dedicated to photographing over 562 federally recognized tribes in the United States to create an unprecedented repository of imagery and oral histories that accurately portrays contemporary Native Americans.

[Burning Cedar](#), a one-minute video mindfulness resource narrated by John Hosteen II, Diné, and developed by the [Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health](#).

Resources for Professionals Serving Young Children and Families

[Caring for Ourselves as We Care for Others](#) is a brief from the [Understanding Trauma and Healing in Adults](#) series that provides information about trauma and how traumatic events can affect families and staff.

[Compassion Fatigue: Can We Care Too Much?](#) - a webinar that explores the meaning of compassion fatigue, causes and symptoms, and strategies for self-care in the early childhood field. In addition, it offers strategies to support your work—whether you are a state policy professional, a professional development or technical assistance provider, or a child care professional.

[Understanding Trauma Informed Care to Build Parent Resilience in American Indian Alaskan Native Head Start](#), a webinar conducted by Marilyn Bruguier Zimmerman, Senior Director of Policy and Programs at the National Native Children’s Trauma Center.

Center for Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is a national center providing technical assistance and professional development to states, territories, and tribal early childhood programs and communities to increase access to high quality mental health consultation (IECMHC) throughout the country. IECMHC is a prevention-based approach that equips caregivers to facilitate children’s healthy social and emotional development. The Center includes numerous resources, including information for [tribal nations](#).

[InBrief: Early Childhood Mental Health](#), a 5-minute video that explains how improving children’s environments of relationships and experiences early in life can prevent initial difficulties from destabilizing later development and mental health. The video provides an overview of [Establishing a Level Foundation for Life: Mental Health Begins in Early Childhood](#), a working paper by the [National Scientific Council on the Developing Child](#).

[Addressing Mental Health Among Children, Staff, and Families in Tribal Early Childhood Programs, and Promoting Equity and Celebrating Resilience in Tribal Early Childhood Program \(Part 2\)](#), are webinar recordings that were featured as part of the [Tribal Early Childhood Webinar Series](#), hosted by ACF’s Office of Early Childhood Development.

[Supporting the Development of Young Children in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Who Are Affected by Alcohol and Substance Exposure \(hhs.gov\)](#), a policy statement issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that provides recommendations that promote the early development of AI/AN children, prenatal to age eight, who have been exposed to alcohol or substances during pregnancy, or who are affected by parent or caregiver substance misuse during early childhood.