

## **Summaries of Current ACF Research in Tribal Communities**

### **Understanding Urban Indians' Interactions with ACF Programs and Services**

Project Officer: Anne Bergan

Contractor: Westat

Principal Investigator: Cynthia Robins

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) funds state, territory, local, and tribal organizations to provide family financial assistance, child support, child care, Head Start, child welfare, and other programs with the goal of promoting the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities. While we know that urban Indians interact with ACF programs and services, we know little about the experiences and needs of urban Indians related to ACF. For the purposes of this project, a preliminary definition describes this group as individuals of American Indian and Alaska Native ancestry who may or may not have direct or active ties with a particular tribe, but who identify with and are at least somewhat active in the Native community in their urban area. This exploratory study seeks to enable ACF to understand a) the barriers and facilitators of access to ACF services among AI/AN living in urban areas; and b) the unmet service needs among these populations that ACF might be able to provide.

In addition to exploring service barriers and facilitators for the urban AI/AN population, this study seeks to understand the role that urban Indian Organizations plays in helping urban Native families meet their social service needs. A technical workgroup to review research questions and study protocols will include researchers with tribal affiliations as well as a representative of the National Council of Urban Indian Health. The two year project began in September 2011 and is being conducted under contract with Westat.

Almost all of the interviews have been conducted and a report, summarizing the findings is expect in the late fall of 2013

### **Study of Coordination of Tribal TANF and Child Welfare Services Grants**

Project Officer: Anne Bergan

Contractor: James Bell Associates

Principal Investigator: Pirkko Ahonen

This project will study the approaches utilized by tribal organizations awarded grants for coordination of Tribal TANF and child welfare services to inform the field of practice as well as policymakers and funders at various levels. The purpose of these grants, as prescribed by statute, is to examine the effectiveness of tribal governments or tribal consortia in coordinating child welfare services and services under tribal TANF programs.

These grants will be used for one or more of the following statutorily prescribed uses:

1. To improve case management for families eligible for assistance from a Tribal TANF program;
2. For supportive services and assistance to tribal children in out-of-home placements and the tribal families caring for such children, including families who adopt such children; and
3. For prevention services and assistance to tribal families at risk of child abuse and neglect.

The study will document how tribal grantees are creating and adapting culturally relevant and appropriate approaches, systems and programs to increase coordination and enhance service delivery to address child abuse and neglect, by supporting grantees in collecting their own data and building relationships with the tribal programs through a collaborative approach that supports the work of each grantee. The study will also document challenges faced and lessons learned. Information developed through the contract is expected to be of value to ACF, to tribal communities, and to a range of stakeholders working with and serving tribal communities.

The study focuses on 14 Tribes and Tribal organizations that are implementing grant-funded demonstration projects with the overarching goal to increase coordination of Tribal TANF and child welfare services and enhance service delivery to address child abuse and neglect. Ten of the grantees are continuing or expanding coordination efforts that began under previous grants and four are new to these coordination efforts.

Site visits to the 14 TTCW grantee sites were conducted from September 2012 through January 2013. The purposes of this first round of site visits were: 1) relationship building with the grantees; 2) clarification of project details; and 3) informal assessment of grantees' data collection capacity and technical assistance needs. Rather than structured on-site data collection, the visits were conceptualized as "clarifying site visits" with the key objective to clarify information included in the grant applications in order to help ensure that the study team members have a clear understanding of the nature, goals, objectives, and approaches of each project before commencing the more structured data collection activities.

The on-site discussions with the grantees and a range of stakeholders yielded clarifying information regarding cross-agency collaboration, implementation strategies, projects' target populations, how and when project activities are/will be implemented and other project details.

### **Evaluation of Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants (ETHPOG)**

Project Officers: Michael Dubinsky and Hilary Forster

Contractor: NORC at the University of Chicago, in partnership with Red Star Innovations and the National Indian Health Board

Principal Investigator: Michel Meit

Authorized by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program provides education and training to TANF recipients and other low-income individuals for occupations in the healthcare field that pay well and are expected to either experience labor shortages or be in high demand. In 2010, the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) awarded grants

to 32 entities located across 23 states. Five of the grant awards were made to Tribal Organizations and Tribal Colleges.

A comprehensive process and outcome evaluation is being conducted of the Tribal HPOG grantees. The five-year study, which began in October 2010, is funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) and led by NORC at the University of Chicago in conjunction with Red Star Innovations and the National Indian Health Board (NIHB). The goal of this evaluation is to provide documentation and lessons about diverse programmatic approaches to health professions training serving the tribal population. Interview and program operations data are being collected to provide an in-depth, systematic analysis of program implementation, operations, and outputs and outcomes in all tribal sites.

The evaluation team is developing a series of practice briefs to disseminate important lessons learned and findings from the evaluation. Two briefs are completed and can be found on OPRE's website:

- An Introduction to the Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) and Evaluation ([http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/tribal\\_health.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/tribal_health.pdf))
- Overview of Tribal Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Supportive Services ([http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/hpog\\_practice\\_brief\\_supportive\\_services\\_june\\_2013\\_0.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/hpog_practice_brief_supportive_services_june_2013_0.pdf))

### **Descriptive Study of Tribal TANF Programs**

Project Officer: Girley Wright

Contractor: The Urban Institute, in partnership with Support Services International

Principal Investigator: Heather Hahn

The study will address a key policy research question: How are Tribal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs being implemented in order to provide services for tribal members? Using interview and program operations data, the study will: 1) Provide an in-depth, systematic description of program implementation, operations, outputs and outcomes in selected sites; and 2) Identify promising practices and other areas for further study. The study will include interviews of Tribal TANF officials and staff and focus groups of Tribal TANF participants during site-visits to four Tribal TANF programs, and reviews of program data from Tribal TANF programs and other data sources.