

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
(NRCOI) Teleconference Program

**TRAINING TO IMPROVE PRACTICE IN RURAL AREAS:
INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2009

2:30 pm Eastern • 1:30 pm Central • 12:30 pm Mountain •
11:30 am Pacific • 10:30 am Alaska • 8:30 am Hawaii

Tribal STAR Presentation (10 minutes)

What was learned about rural practice and training people for rural practice?

I. Implications of Results and Recommendations

Over the 5 year project period what began as a tenuous relationship between a university program and the tribal community evolved into a program that continues to fill a specific role within the child welfare community. This accomplishment is a result of unique circumstances, held together by part-time staff with a passion for making improvements in their communities. There are a few themes that re-occurred during the program implementation that can serve as recommendations for future programs:

- Build trusting relationships at onset.
- Consult tribal community leaders, partners, and gatekeepers on local protocol and integrate their input and participation at all levels of program development, implementation, and evaluation.
- Whenever possible host meetings at sites that are familiar to the clients, for example on the reservation, bringing public agency personnel to the people instead of the other way around. (This helps with trust building.)
- Whenever possible, provide food at the meeting or function so that all participants eat together. (This is especially important when working with the Tribal community.) Use Tribal protocol when serving the food—elders, children, those who came from farthest away and pregnant women serve themselves first. If the elder is very elderly or physically fragile, serve him or her yourself.
- Make innovation a goal when revising program elements, including curricula, materials development, multi-media, etc.
- Acknowledge that young social workers and recent MSW graduates may be limited in their life experience which can affect their ability to grasp the depth of issues of grief and loss, and historic trauma.
- Acknowledge historic distrust and the challenge of being associated with agencies and institutions that have a negative history with tribal people.
- Be transparent and honor your word.
- Always state your intention at the beginning of any meeting, function, event or training and frame it in a manner that indicates you are there to help and not to be an expert.

- Consider the usefulness of integrating *Tribal STAR Tips for Following Protocol When Working with Tribal Communities* (handout).

Recommendations for project funders:

- Support reward-based efforts, the budget as meeting related expenses that can result in increased participation and long-term positive outcomes.
- Provide clarity of process and support timely movement of funds across project budget lines to ensure continuity of efforts.
- Provide programs with tips for protocol and other resources that can help forge early trust-based relationships.

Recommendations for the general field:

- Engage tribal community with purpose and transparency.
- Learn about your local history and know the tribal domain in which your agency and service area resides.
- Make an effort to personally meet tribal representatives rather than connecting solely by e-mail or phone.
- Be aware of cultural differences and value differences across cultures and generations.
- Allow for longer response time across all areas of communication: personal, agency, government.

*Refer to handout *Tribal STAR Publications and Materials* for additional information.



*Tribal STAR is a program of the Academy for Professional Excellence,
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