Information for Parents about Sexual Health Risks for Native Youth

Circle of Life is a youth sexual risk reduction program for prevention of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B & C, sexually transmitted infections and teen pregnancy. Parents may have questions about whether their children are at risk for teen pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections. Since Native Americans make up a relatively small portion of the population health statistics are often scare and may also underestimate actual risks. Nevertheless, statistics are listed below that describe risks for all youth, and for Native American young adults.

**HIV/AIDS¹**

**Young People**
- During the years 2008-2011, the rates of HIV diagnoses increased in young people 15-19 and 20-24 years of age.
- For males ages 13-19 years, 92.8% of new cases of HIV were from male to male sexual contact.
- In 2010, it was estimated that there were 39,000 young adults aged 13-24 years and 8,631 adolescents aged 13-19 living with undiagnosed HIV infection in the US. These youth represent a risk for transmission of the disease to other youth through risky behaviors. Early testing and identification is essential to help infected youth receive care and to prevent them from unwittingly passing the virus on to their sexual partners.

**Native American Youth and Adults**
- 23.1% of all HIV diagnosis among Native Americans are among those under 25 year old.
- It is estimated that 25% of Native Americans living with HIV are undiagnosed.
- In 2010, HIV infection was the ninth leading cause of death among AI/ANs ages 25-34.²
- Once diagnosed with AIDS Native Americans have poorer survival rate compared to other racial groups.

**Sexually Transmitted Infections³**

Native Americans have higher rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis than whites and Hispanics/Latinos and are second only to blacks/African Americans, who have the highest rates for all three STIs. STIs increase the susceptibility to HIV infection

**Alcohol and Illicit Drug Use**

Alcohol and illicit drug use. Substance use can lead to sexual behaviors that increase the risk of HIV infection. Although alcohol and substance abuse does not cause HIV infection, it is an associated risk factor because of its ability to reduce inhibitions and impair judgment. Compared with other racial/ethnic groups, Native Americans tend to use alcohol and drugs at a younger age, use them more often and in higher quantities, and experience more negative consequences from them.

**Teen Pregnancy⁴**

In 2007, the birth rate for Native Americans teen girls (ages 15-19) was 59.0 per 1,000. The rate was 7% higher than in 2006 and above the national birth rate of 42.5 per 1,000.
Native American teen birth rates vary considerably between states. Native Americans teens in New Jersey have the lowest teen birth rate (16 per 1,000 in New Jersey) and those in Nebraska have the highest teen birth rate (122 per 1,000 in Nebraska).

In 2006, 90% of births to Native Americans teens aged 15-19 were to unmarried teen moms.

Although sexual activity among 10-12 year olds is generally low, rates jump by age 15. It is important to reach youth before they become sexually active to delay sexual activity and to prevent risky behavior. In 2010, birth rates for 10-14 year olds were 0.6 per 1,000 across all races while birth rates for 15-19 year old Native Americans were 38.7 births per 1,000 nationally.

The large gap between these age groups suggests a prevention opportunity for reaching young people with age-appropriate education before they become sexually active. Youth report that early education is an important prevention strategy.

Surveys have shown that up to 91% of teens at BIA funded schools report having had sex before graduating from high school and 22% report having more than 4 partners. Among sexually active youth grades 9-12 only 58% reported using a condom the last time they had intercourse.

References

4 The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. For more information go to: www.TheNationalCampaign.org