

## **NACE/NREPP Conference Summary**

### **April 11-12, 2012**

### **Santa Fe, NM**

**The following conference summary attempts to reflect the rich discussions and highlights of SAMHSA's Native American Center for Excellence (NACE) and National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) Conference. A special thank you to all of the participants who together made this conference real and valuable.**

**PowerPoint presentations and conference material are available on the NACE website (<http://nace.samhsa.gov>) under Technical Assistance - NREPP**

#### **Background and Purpose**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP) and the Native American Center for Excellence (NACE) co-hosted a first-of-its-kind conference on April 11-12, 2012, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The goal of this conference was to provide an interactive experience where attendees would have direct access to content experts and information about NREPP. The conference brought together American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN), Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Canadian Province program developers and evaluators who have 1) experience or strong interest in submitting programs for NREPP review and/or 2) designing, implementing, or evaluating programs for Native populations in the areas of substance abuse prevention, substance abuse treatment, mental health promotion, and mental health treatment. Attendees represented tribes from across the continental U.S., as well as indigenous groups from Hawaii, Canada and New Zealand.

#### **Conference Structure**

The conference addressed the needs of program developers and program evaluators through breakout working groups as well as joint plenary sessions. The conference presented opportunities throughout the agenda for cross sharing and community learning among participants.

#### **Major Themes Expressed by Participants**

Over the course of this two-day conference, there were many opportunities for participants to share their experiences, concerns, voice their opinions, and have their

questions addressed. Several recurring themes arose during these discussions as follows:

### **Concern about measuring Native programs in a “Western” scientific framework**

- Need for cultural sensitivity towards the approaches and traditions of Indian Country, which are not scientifically measured.
- Formal evaluation is in conflict with cultural traditions and it feels like judgment
- Healing and traditional methods are seen as incompatible with “Western” scientific methods, and it is inappropriate to test them in that way.
- For Native cultures and their ecological programs, outcomes are not seen as discrete, rather they are interconnected as a holistic continuum.
- Discrete IOM categories (Universal, Selected and Indicated) don’t necessarily apply in Indian Country since there may be a large overlap due to a high incidence rate for items like alcoholism.
- Need more local evaluators, or evaluators who can take adequate time to familiarize themselves with the community before embarking on evaluation.

### **Concern over the compatibility of NREPP with Native programs**

- How can you reconcile the evidence-based process of NREPP with the historical wisdom of the community?
- Trust is a two-way street; if Native populations are being urged to consider “Western” scientific standards of research, then NREPP should be more open to qualitative research exploring the native oral traditions.

### **Questions regarding how to obtain funding and resources to conduct evaluations and maintain programs**

- More resources including Technical Assistance, Evaluators, and Training in Research are needed in Indian Country.
- Concern about charging others (clients) for dissemination materials, training, etc. and the idea of “owning” intellectual materials as this is contrary to the culture of many Native populations.
- Concern about the cost of producing materials for dissemination on NREPP
- Need to offer programs that give room for others to adapt the materials and methods since different tribes have different needs and traditions.
- Need more sources of funding specifically for Indian Country.

### **Need for better understanding of various types of evaluation designs, as well as finding appropriate outcomes and measures**

- How do we test theoretical models based on Native traditions?
- Qualitative data is not rated in the NREPP system, yet stories carry heart and spirit, and a richness of truth— a journey to healing, not static or discreet.
- What are some measures that could work with Native practices?

- What types of quasi-experimental designs are acceptable? Wait-list control?
- The IRB process in Indian Country requires evaluators to show the benefits of the research to the tribe.
- Determining what information should be shared and what shouldn't needs to be approved by the community.
- Many traditional methods are sacred and not to be shared outside of the community, so manualizing such programs is not appropriate.
- For the community to support and value evaluation, researchers need to make sure to always report back to the community the results of the evaluation.

### **Desire to have greater cultural understanding from NREPP**

- Need for increased NREPP understanding and acknowledgement of different indigenous groups (e.g., Native American, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian Native, Hawaiian National, etc.).
- Need for NREPP and others to understand how historical trauma plays into current issues and concerns.

### **Support from NACE/NREPP**

- Mentors from NACE or NREPP to serve in a mentorship role for program developers who want to apply to NREPP; help to walk them through the submission process; offer ways to enhance developers' capacity to do this in addition to all of their contractual obligations [NOTE: Mentors are available through NACE].
- Appropriate reviewers for RFD and QOR reviews (i.e., NA representation), as well as TA for potential reviewers for Native American, Native Hawaiian, etc. programs [NOTE: NREPP has interviewed and approved Native reviewers as a result of this request at the conference].
- NACE to reach out to more programs to disseminate information about EBPs and NREPP [NOTE: NACE continues to provide technical assistance (TA) and conference presentations on EBPs and the NREPP process; NREPP is providing conference workshops on NREPP].
- Information on how NREPP should/can address Participatory Methods
- NREPP Web site should have a disclaimer that users should choose programs that are outcome and population appropriate
- Include an elder on the panel
- Need to honor the grass roots of these programs. NREPP should add a 5th reviewer with community credentials. This person can have a cross-conversation with the other reviewers so that the system does not appear so hierarchical. [Please see previous note on Native NREPP reviewers].
- Have evaluators/reviewers go out to Indian Country, meet people, speak to people, see the programs, before serving on a panel. Also need to look at the collaborative application process. [NOTE: NACE has Native and non-Native consultants who provide evaluation expertise in Indian Country].

- Conference notes should be shared with everyone, so we all have a record of what was discussed.

### **Evaluation support**

- Information on and guidance in creating logic models [NOTE: NACE can provide technical assistance on logic models, evaluation design, strength-based measures, qualitative and quantitative research]]
- Information on and guidance in developing research designs that are acceptable to NREPP, including time series, and quasi-experimental studies [see note above]
- Information on identifying appropriate strengths-based measures [see note above]
- Research support [see note above]
- More information on appropriate evaluation tools and measures used with NA programs
- Examples of how to convert qualitative data to quantitative data
- Data collection and analysis assistance; how to work with small “n’s” when there are not very many people in a given remote area (hard to create comparison groups)

### **Help in identifying resources**

- Would like a list of funding resources
- Ideas on how to enhance program capacity [Please see NOTE regarding NACE evaluation support]
- Information on how to get more resources for staffing
- Information on how to establish financially sustainable programs
- Information on how to connect to Native American evaluators and tribal universities to do evaluation research [Please see NOTE regarding NACE evaluation support]
- Reach out to/partner with graduate students, such as those in the Native American Studies program at UNM

### **Other**

- Advocacy from the Federal, State, and local government. The local and State governments both add requirements, which does not allow them the flexibility to do what they need to do to become evidence-based. They need support from the government [NOTE: NACE technical assistance may be able to assist]
- More and continuing interactions with program developers and evaluators of EBPs and social entrepreneurs [NOTE: all are welcome to participate in future NACE NREPP learning community conference calls and webinars, contact NACE for details]
- Share best practices from the State of Oregon [NOTE: information is on the NACE website under Technical Assistance - NREPP]

## List of Recommendations and Requests

During the breakout groups and plenary sessions, the attendees offered the following recommendations and requests:

- Develop courses for program evaluators on: study designs, such as Mixed Method; how to overcome sampling issues; and how to create Logic Models
- Provide information on how to statistically address: non-equivalent groups; the limitations of quasi-experimental designs; analysis of qualitative data to yield quantitative data
- Seek out NREPP reviewers with a background on Native American culture and traditions [NOTE: see previous note on Native NREPP reviewers]
- Collaborate with NACE to develop a glossary that translates "scientific language" to common language terminology geared toward indigenous populations [NOTE: NACE is exploring expanding its document on *Steps for Conducting Research and Evaluation in Indian Communities* to include a glossary as suggested]
- Provide culturally-sensitivity training to NREPP staff and reviewers [NOTE: NACE is exploring this request]
- Develop a collaborative application process to look at which program elements are considered best practices
- Allow for studies that report effect sizes and confidence intervals, rather than p-values, since this reflects current standards
- Get the word out to the community about Service to Science [NOTE: NACE disseminates STS information through its website and email distribution lists]
- Provide examples of NREPP programs that have a qualitative component

In addition, NREPP and NACE staff offer the following recommendations based on their observations over the course of the conference:

- Offer continuing outreach and TA through NACE for interested submitters [NOTE:NACE TA may be available by request; in addition, all are welcome to participate in future NACE NREPP learning community conference calls and webinars, contact NACE for details]
- Maintain an ongoing feedback loop with attendees to check on how we can improve our interactions, language and understanding of their needs
- Dissemination materials should identify core components versus adaptable components, providing a "shell" to support replication in new tribal (or non-tribal) sites.
- Materials costs can be kept to a minimum by distributing them as electronic documents, web-based materials, or print-on-demand.

## Resources

At the end of Day 2, Holly Echo-Hawk provided information on the following resources. Attendees requested copies of her handouts.

- Tribal System of Care funding

- National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
- Road to Evidence, 2005: What is Practice-based Evidence?
- “Indigenous Communities and Evidence Building” (Echo-Hawk, H., *J Psychoactive Drugs*. 2011 Oct-Dec;43(4):269-75)
- Society of Prevention Research
- Society of Indian Psychologists
- Center for the Application of Prevention Technology (CAPT)
- Culture as Treatment (CAT)
- American Evaluators Association
- First Nations Behavioral Health Association
- Indian Health Services

In addition, attendees and NREPP/NACE staff offered these additional resources:

- National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)
- National Relief Charities
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) summer research program for minority undergraduate students
- Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OIASA)
- Oregon Tribal Evidence-Based and Cultural Best Practices
- SAMHSA Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Center for Excellence
- NREPP PowerPoint presentations

### **Observations and Comments at the Close of the Conference**

- This has been a really good conference.
- It is difficult to get IRB approval in Indian Country. Also, it is harder to get IRB approval when working with several tribes at once, as opposed to just one.
- We feel safe to tell you our issues. You have made this process feel safe. We are talking about our problems, not you. This has been a very affirming experience. I feel appreciated, accepted, and great kindness. And I feel like I am well on the road.
- This was a history-making conference.
- Feel encouraged and enthused about the NREPP process.
- The testimonies and presentations were from the heart.
- One frustration is that national reports label people as “white”, “black”, “Hispanic”, or “Other”. We need to not be “other”. Someone needs to advocate for Native People in government reports.
- I understand the value of statistics now. Right now, there are a lot of trust issues with statistics.
- Native American peoples’ life expectancy is 10-15 years lower than the average American, and we need to change that.
- This has never happened before, NREPP bringing this kind of group together.
- Tribal experts should be viewed on a level playing field with non-tribal experts.
- Culture matters: This is a history-making meeting.
- This has been very powerful and helpful to have [NREPP and NACE] here.
- While we cannot trust you yet, we can still dance.

- We are entitled to our own opinions, but we are not entitled to our own facts. You need to distinguish between reality *in fact* and reality *in agreement*. We are all part of the human race.
- We need to overcome our own sense of reality and be proud of our differences and contributions; then we will be effective healers.
- Let's not distrust statistics, but test and advocate for our theoretical models.
- A separate registry would marginalize us; we need to realize that we also can be effective.
- I learned that the change in self-esteem of our people is something that can be measured by NREPP; I just learned that NREPP is interested in this. This is a huge weight off our shoulders.
- There is diversity among Native populations; interracial children (many tribes/mixed races) are common.
- Many of the measures that are important in Indian Country are strength-based.
- We would like to have something translated for our people that explains your process.
- A separate registry for Native communities would diminish our work.
- A glossary is needed that contains indigenous terms for communities for as well as explanations of reliability, validity, fidelity, etc. [NOTE: NACE is exploring expanding its document on *Steps for Conducting Research and Evaluation in Indian Communities* to include a glossary as suggested].
- Perception of power can control us.
- I am trying to step out of the box by trusting.
- Traditional healers on the panel would have been great. Healers provide guidance and knowledge to the community.
- Elders are guides in the community. We need help on how to measure healing. The healing will reduce the rates of suicide.
- Fear of being judged/measured again; showing, not telling, is how interventions show proof that they work.

**Thank you to all of the conference participants for your valuable contributions!  
We look forward to continuing this important work with you.**