

Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center



- **LIFE SKILLS PARENTING**

- **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF NATIVE
WOMEN AND GIRLS**

MIWRC



- **The Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center has had its doors open to the at-large community for almost 20 years. We provide services for family stabilization, including:**
 - Family Services
 - The Healing Journey Program
 - Sexual Assault Advocacy
 - Emergency and Supportive Housing
 - Early Childhood Education
 - Education and Resources
 - Life Skills Parenting

Life Skills Parenting Program



- The program is designed to stabilize American Indian families by introducing and educating American Indian parents to the traditional value system through mentors modeling those values – providing a practical, culturally specific approach in the areas of life skills and parenting.
- The target population was initially American Indian women with children that have open child protection cases in Hennepin County and/or are at risk of having at least one child placed in substituted care due to maltreatment or neglect. Criteria has since been widened – now there is no requirement regarding open child protection cases.
- Focuses on the needs of mothers – male caregivers have other options for participation after mother have completed the initial stabilization phase of the program.

Major Findings from Wilder Foundation



- 15 mothers participated in this study – with 37 children ages 2 to 13. Almost half were referred by Child Protection.
- 10 participants were single mothers.
- With an average of 29/30 years of age, the mothers participating in the Life Skills Parenting Program have significant life challenges that contribute to very high stress levels.
- Self-sufficiency is a major challenge for the women entering the Life Skills Program. 87% of mothers had less than a 12th grade education or GED.

Barriers



- **Housing continues to be the main barrier in our communities.**
- **Maintaining a sober or chemically-free lifestyle**
- **Numerous crises are usually occurring at once**
- **History of Abuse**

Participants Urgent Crisis at Intake



- 87% needed mental health treatment for parent (s)
- 80% needed basic household items
- 67% needed housing
- 60% needed transportation assistance.
- 53% needed family counseling.
- 40% needed mental health treatment for children.
- 40% needed assistance with utility bills.
- 20% needed medical treatment for parent or children
- 20% needed substance abuse treatment.
- 20% needed help with management of / access to psych meds.
- 20% needed legal assistance.
- 13% needed help with management of / access to other medications.
- 13% dental care for mother or children
- 13% safety needs (domestic violence, other threat of violence)
- 6% help addressing a gambling problem.
- 6% support services for brain trauma

History of Abuse and Assault



- **Physical** 40% by mother/step mother
53% by father/step father
20% by other relative
40% by spouse/ boyfriend
- **Sexual** 7% by mother/step mother
13% by father/step father
33% by other relative
20% by spouse/boyfriend
- **Psychological** 33% by mother/step mother
40% by father/step father
13% by other relative
40% by spouse/boyfriend
- **Head injury** 7% by other relative
7% by spouse/boyfriend

Urgent Needs of Clients at Intake



- **Mental Health Treatment for the mother and children.**
- **Basic Household needs (food, diapers, household items)**
- **Housing (emergency and transitional)**
- **Transportation to services and required meetings**
- **Family Counseling**

Culturally Appropriate Healing



- The LSP program provides traditional teachings of values and beliefs on: Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Truth, Honesty and Humility.
- The Medicine Wheel has been utilized as a focus point for teaching these traditional values. The Medicine Wheel teachings contribute to a well balanced parent by connecting them to resources and to various mentoring techniques, role modeling, and opportunities to learn parenting skills.
- The Medicine Wheel is a holistic approach to life in which the emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of each person are in balance and connected to all living systems in a balanced way.

The Medicine Wheel



Wisdom: Wisdom was treasured because it took hard work and often much suffering to acquire.

Love: to show compassion and caring for others and to be respectful of others was essential in building harmonious relationships.

Respect: Children learn respect by being respected, adults role model respect in the way that they are honored, and allowed others to maintain dignity through ceremony, ritual and everyday practices.

Bravery: every day there are numerous opportunities to carry out courageous and brave acts. It is demonstrated in doing what needs to be done in spite of difficulty. While taking into account the safety of others

Truth: to live in a truthful way was to allow actions and words to demonstrate the truth, it meant listening to an inner voice and making decisions based on truth, being truthful to self.

Honesty: is essential in the building of relationships, honesty in relationships meant that people could be counted on not to lie, steal or cheat.

Humility: to be humble was to not place self above any other but to realize that one was no more important than another.



Homeless Children and Sexual Exploitation in American Indian Communities



**HOW SEXUAL VIOLENCE IMPACTS HOUSING AND
CHILD WELL BEING**

American Indian women



- Native women harassed by landlords, losing housing.
- Lack of knowledge of rights, access to attorneys.
- Losing housing high risk factor for entering child protection system and risk of TPR.
- Sexual violence in Indian country.

Women



- **Women without custody of their children and mothers with young children are the most rapidly increasing population of homeless people.**
- **Heightened risk of sexual violence, including trafficking (VAWNET).**
- **High % of homeless women reporting sexual violence histories.**
- **Few options for homeless women – survival sex.**

Links to Prostitution



- **84 % of women who had been prostituted reported current or past homelessness.**
- **Study by Lauren Martin – 76 % of people engaged in prostitution have children, estimated 20,000 children exposed to prostitution nationwide.**
- **75 % of prostituted women are mothers.**
- **Anecdotal evidence of women engaging their daughters in prostitution – one story.**

Prostitution and Sex Trafficking



- **Nearly 90 % of prostituted women have history of childhood sexual abuse, etc.**
- **93 % of homeless mothers experienced severe physical and/or sexual violence at some time.**
- **Experiences of sexual violence known to predict risk of homelessness and shelter use.**

Sex Trafficking



- Average age of entry into prostitution is 12 years old.
- Children under the age of 18 now largest group of trafficked victims in US.
- 90 % of runaways become part of commercial sex industry.
- Federal and state laws – juvenile prostitution by definition a federal crime.

Juvenile Risk Factors



- In AI communities, rates of FASD 3 x as high.
- In MN, 44.4 % of AI kids live in single female head of household families – high indicator of poverty.
- 42.3 % of AI families in MN live in poverty.
- Normalization of gender violence – environmental risk factors in Indian country.

Homelessness and American Indians



- **One in five homeless children in MN is an AI child. We are less than 2 % of total state population.**
- **One survey found that 28 % of homeless AI did not stay in shelters.**
- **Links to child protection interventions in Indian families.**

More on AI kids and homelessness



- One report estimates 60 % of runaway or “throwaway” kids are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation (trafficking).
- Substantial # of youth become homeless due to poverty, family dysfunction, and mental illness.
- Impact of homelessness on kids – increased risk of medical problems, academic failure, adult problems like homelessness and CD issues. For females increased risk of sexual assault.

ACE Study and AI families



- **Adverse Childhood Experiences indicators show repeated/long term toxic stress can damage early brain development.**
- **Low threshold for stress coping later in life, additional cognitive impacts.**
- **Only 7 % of AI accessed quality early learning centers where appropriate interventions may take place (US Dept of Ed.).**
- **ACE indicators on adults – demonstrates a link between specific violence related stressors and risky behaviors and health problems in adulthood.**

What is Needed



- **Advocates for Human Rights Sex Trafficking Needs Assessment – Vick Trafficking Task Force.**
- **Finding/Recommendation 2.1 – lack of services tailored to meet specific needs of trafficked victims includes case management, housing, counseling, health care, etc.**
- **2007 OJP report showed 342 trafficked AI victims – lack of clear data remains a barrier.**

Advocates Report



- **Common paths to prostitution (commercial sexual exploitation) include: a relationship with someone involved in “the life”, homelessness, drug abuse, and solicitation of an adult.**
- **Average of 36 hours on the streets of Mpls before solicitation for juveniles.**
- **Names Phoenix Project at MIWRC “Good Practice”.**

Needs



- Lack of culturally based emergency shelter and transitional housing a barrier.
- Trafficked youth particularly have few options – less than 100 beds available statewide.
- Comprehensive needs rarely provided by one provider – coordinating response is a challenge.

MIWRC



- **Statistics in 3rd Precinct – 93 % of all arrests for prostitution in the state.**
- **Our sexual assault advocate working at the ACF.**
- **11 of 13 women released between June – Sept. 2008 had no housing of any kind. 10 of the 11 returned to their pimps for housing and drugs.**
- **Overwhelming need for culturally based services.**

Tribes



- About 95 % of women incarcerated at ACF on prostitution related charges have never been to reservation, or unwilling to go as it represents site of early trauma.
- Evidence of “pipelines” to Duluth and Twin Cities.
- All women in MIWRC support group at ACF identified safe, supportive housing as the #1 need for them to escape prostitution.

Legislation



- MIWRC, DIW, MIWSAC seeking state support to open transitional program for 16 – 19 trafficking victims.
- Also need permanent supportive housing for adult victims.
- Modeled after Breaking Free's approach to working with women victimized in this way.
- The Swedish Model.

What you can do



- **Contact elected officials and lobby for increased supports for housing for high risk populations.**
- **Insist on equity in judicial system that over-victimizes women and inadequately punishes perpetrators (“johns”, “patrons”, “customers”, etc.)**
- **Question corporate interests in pornography – example: pay-for-view in large hotel chains.**