



***Depression Among
American Indian and
Alaska Native Women
In Michigan***



Depression Across the Lifespan

- Nationally, American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) have higher rates of depression than any other racial group.
- In some regions—including Michigan—AI/AN women experience depression more frequently than men.
- In Michigan, the lifetime rate of depression or other mental health disorders was 35% among tribal members who were enrolled in a home visiting program for pregnant and parenting women and their families.

Suicide Among Women of Childbearing Age

- Nationally, AI/AN women think about suicide more than AI/AN men, but in most communities women do not complete suicide as often as men do.
- However, in Michigan, the amount of suicides among AI/AN women of childbearing age is nearly double that of AI/AN men, and nearly triple that of the state as a whole.

Associated Risk Factors

- Chronic stress and chaos are common among Michigan AI/AN families enrolled in a home visiting program for pregnant and parenting women.
- Among families in that same home visiting program for pregnant and parenting women, lifetime alcohol and other substance abuse reached rates of 24-35%. Binge-drinking is especially concerning among this population.
- Alcohol and other substance use is associated with depression and increased risk for suicide in tribal communities across the nation.
- Other common risk factors for depression and suicide among AI/AN women include: historical trauma, domestic violence, socioeconomic distress, and acculturation from tribal activities and traditions.

Healing from Depression

- Depression can be addressed clinically through counseling, medical therapies, and treatment of co-morbid alcohol and other substance abuse disorders.
- In tribal communities, however, clinical treatment of depression seems to be less effective and less accessible due to a shortage of culturally competent health care providers, and a lack of evidence-based treatment programs.

Enculturation into the tribal community appears to be a strong protective factor against suicide and mental health disorders among AI/AN people of all ages.