

# Healthcare and Public Health Policy in American Indian and Alaska Native Populations

Review of Federal Policies that Contribute to Racial and Ethnic Health Inequities  
National Academies  
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# IHS Mission and Vision

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- **The IHS mission** is to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.
- **The IHS vision** is healthy communities and quality health care systems through strong partnerships and culturally responsive practices.



# Indian Health Service

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- Provides a comprehensive health service delivery system for approximately **2.56 million** American Indians and Alaska Natives
- Serves members of **574** federally recognized tribes
- IHS total staff consists of about **15,370** employees
  - Includes approximately 2,380 nurses, 776 physicians, 798 pharmacists, 195 sanitarians, 104 physician assistants, and 270 dentists



Data as of August 2020. Source: <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/ihsprofile/>

# Equity in Policies

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- Funding
- Grants
- Applicability



# Agency Funding

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- Advanced appropriations
- Mandatory Funding
- Equitable funding per person



# Grants

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- Eligibility
- Open competition
- Matching funds



# Jurisdictions

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- The tribal communities should be classified as sovereign nations with the borders of the reservations
- Many reservations cross over state lines so there are inherent challenges
- The new court decisions: *McGirt v Oklahoma*





# Health programs

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- Access and impact of government based programs
- Addressing tribal needs and effect with program requirements
- Proscriptive programs



# Health Equity

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*Health equity is the principle underlying a commitment to reduce—and, ultimately, eliminate—disparities in health and in its determinants, including social determinants. Pursuing health equity means striving for the highest possible standard of health for all people and giving special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health, based on social conditions.*

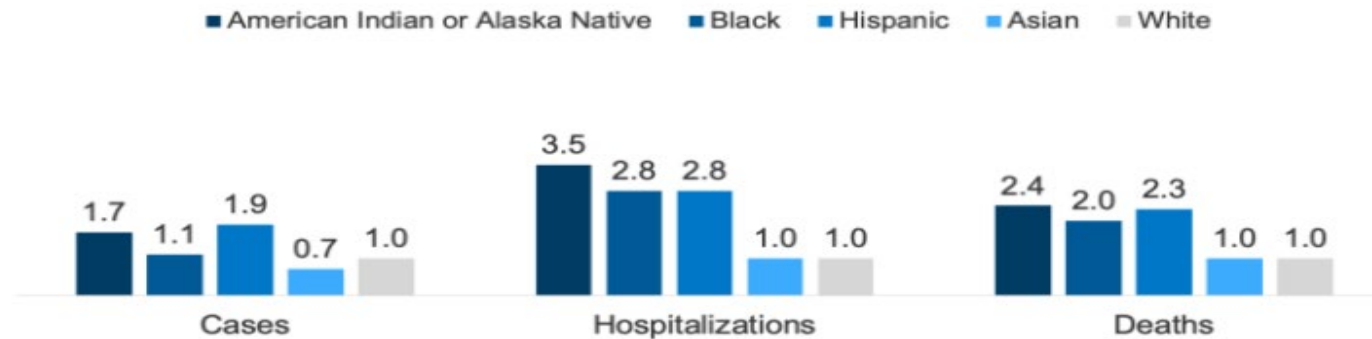
[Public Health Rep.](#) 2014 Jan-Feb; 129(Suppl 2): 5–8.



# Comparison Data Kaiser Foundation

Figure 2

Risk of Infection, Hospitalization, and Death compared to White People in the United States, Adjusted for Age



NOTE: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic; other groups are non-Hispanic.  
SOURCE: CDC, Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death by Race/Ethnicity, <https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>, accessed October 6, 2021.

KFF

Figure 2: Risk of Infection, Hospitalization, and Death compared to White People in the United States, Adjusted for Age



# Equality versus equity

## EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.



# Impact of disparities on health

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- Housing
- Transportation
- Food insecurity
- Access to healthcare
- Environmental hazards
- Access to water, electricity
- Access to broadband



# Mitigation

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- Sustainable Infrastructure
- Improve transportation
- Mobile healthcare access
- Innovation for provision of healthcare
- Education and training for public health jobs
- Enhanced support for recruitment
- Partnering with external resources
- Healthy food access
- Preventative care

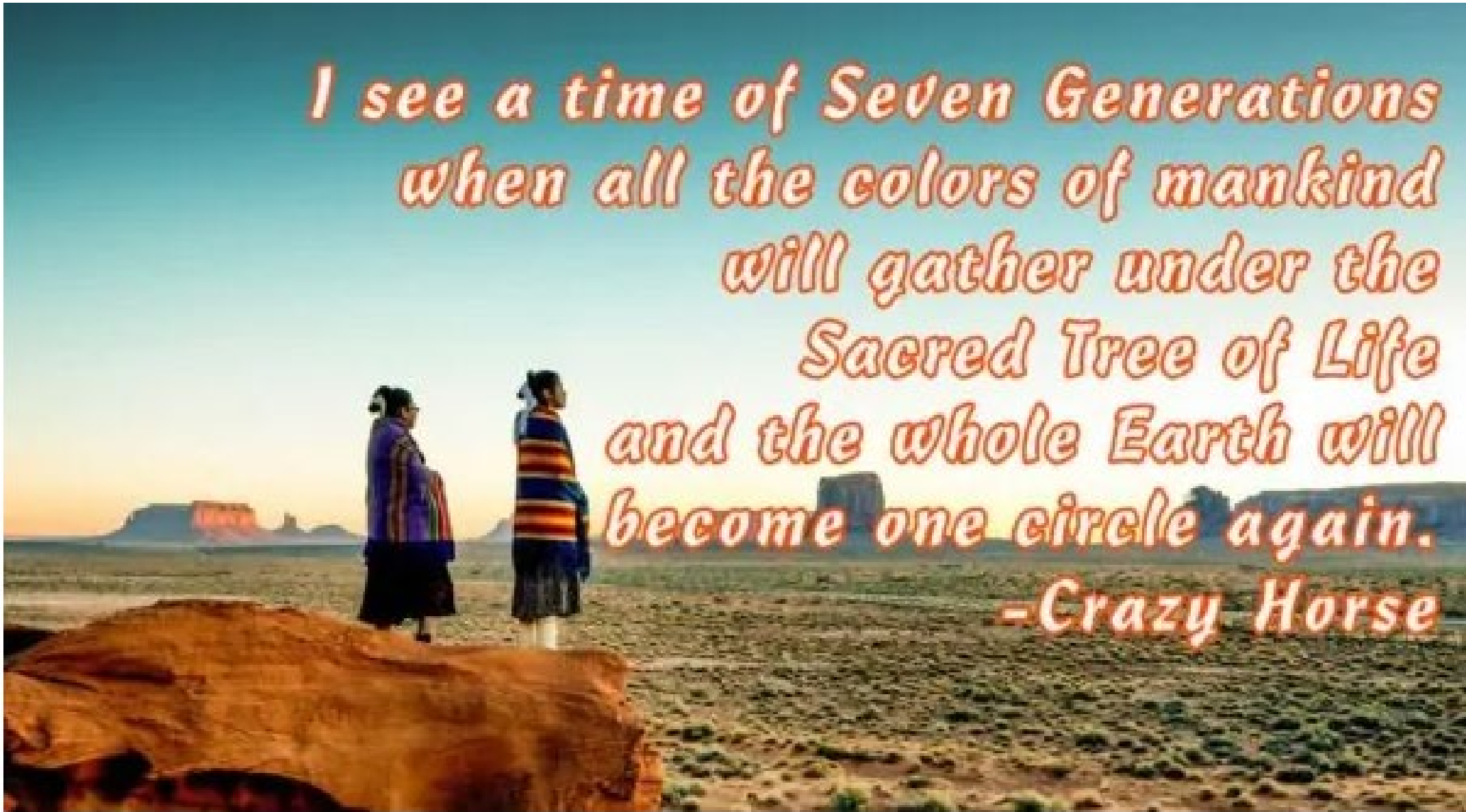


# Mitigation

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- Enhanced support for recruitment
- Partnering with external resources
- Healthy food access
- Preventative care
- Mandatory tribal consultation and urban confer
- Inclusiveness
- Communication
- Constant feedback with early mitigation



A photograph of two Native Americans standing on a large, reddish-brown rock in a desert landscape. The person on the left is wearing a purple and black robe, and the person on the right is wearing a blue and orange striped robe. They are both looking towards the horizon. In the background, there are several large, flat-topped rock formations under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image in a stylized, orange-outlined font.

*I see a time of Seven Generations  
when all the colors of mankind  
will gather under the  
Sacred Tree of Life  
and the whole Earth will  
become one circle again.*

*- Crazy Horse*



