

We must remember that we have Indigenous solutions to our problems.



Native Children and Youth Exposed to Violence Fact Sheet

"Native children and youth, like their ancestors, continue to be resilient in the face of extreme adversity." – United States Department of Justice

United States Department of Justice Statistics

- American Indian and Alaska Native children suffer exposure to violence at rates higher than any other race in the United States.
- Reports for substance abuse related to child abuse and neglect is more likely to be reported for American Indian and Alaska Native families.
- Violence, including intentional injuries, homicide and suicide, accounts for 75% of deaths of American Indian and Alaska Native youth ages 12-20.
- Violent crime rates in Indian Country are more than 2.5 times the national rate and some reservations see more than 20 times the national rate.
- An average of 4.1 lifetime traumas have been reported, with threat of injury and witnessing injury being the most common form of trauma exposure for American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

Native children and youth who are exposed to violence face obstacles that effect their health and wellbeing. Alarmingly Native children and youth experience posttraumatic stress disorder three times the rate of the general U.S. population (United States Department of Justice).

Long and Short Term Effects of Exposure to Violence

- Immediate effects of exposure to violence according to the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) include:
 - *Increased rates of altered neurological development*
 - *Poor physical and mental health*
 - *Poor school performance*
 - *Substance abuse*
 - *Overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system*
- Chronic exposure to violence often leads to toxic stress reactions and severe trauma, which is compounded with historical trauma (United States Department of Justice, P. 6).
- Children are among those seriously affected by exposure to violence (USDOJ).
- Frequent exposure not only predisposes children to the numerous social and physical problems, but it also normalizes violence, increasing their risk of turning to violence as they become older (USDOJ).

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Behaviors to watch for in children who may be exposed to violence, according to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:

- In young children there may be: an increased fear or anxiety; depression; loss of interest in school, friends or other things they enjoyed in the past; sleep problems, including nightmares and bedwetting; increased aggression; anger; spending more time alone; fighting at home or at school; bullying or being bullied; and changes in appetite.
- In adolescents, there may be: drug or alcohol abuse; skipping school; changes in peer groups; new rebellious or oppositional behavior; declining grades; social withdrawal; depression or anxiety; loss of interest in school, friends or other things they enjoyed in the past.

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- » Attorney general's advisory committee on American Indian/Alaska native children exposed to violence: Ending violence so children can thrive (2014, November). In *United States Department of Justice*. Retrieved from http://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/defendingchildhood/pages/attachments/2015/03/23/ending_violence_so_children_can_thrive.pdf
 - » *The United States Department of Justice* Web. 2 July 2015. <http://www.justice.gov/ovw/domestic-violence>.
 - » Facts for families: Helping children exposed to domestic violence (2013, April). In *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. Retrieved from
 - » http://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Helping_Children_Exposed_to_Domestic_Violence_109.aspx

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