Protecting At-Risk Tribal Youth

FIRST RESPONSE

POCKET GUIDE

AMBER Alert
in Indian Country

OJJDP

AMBER® ALERT

Fox Valley TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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PROTECTING AT-RISK TRIBAL YOUTH

This booklet is designed to help tribal communities determine when a child is at risk for developing problem behaviors or being victimized. Inside, you will find descriptions and ways to identify six key issues that pose the biggest threat to tribal youth today, along with local departments you can contact to help address the issue. There is also a listing towards the end of this booklet of national hotlines that you can call if you are concerned about the well being of a youth you know.

This booklet is intended to be used by all community members to increase awareness of the signs tribal youth might exhibit when they need help. Place this resource throughout your community—in a police officer's car, in a teacher's classroom, at the front desk of a Boys & Girls Club, at the nurse's station of your local hospital—to share information on these issues:

- Violence and gang activity
- Internet crimes against children
- Sexual abuse and exploitation
- Mental health issues
- Missing children
- Children at-risk for abduction

Additionally, there is a listing at the end of this booklet of youth-serving organizations that serve tribal youth across the country to provide safe, nurturing, and productive environments and positive youth development programming. Contact any of these organizations if you know a child who could benefit from these services.

A citation list of works used to create this publication is available by contacting Fox Valley Technical College at askamber@ncjtc.org.

VIOLENCE AND GANG ACTIVITY

What Is the Issue?

A gang is an association of three or more people whose members adopt a group identity used to create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation through a common name, slogan, identifying symbol, tattoo or other physical marking, color of clothing, hairstyle, hand sign, or graffiti, among other signs. Gangs often use violence or intimidation to preserve their power, reputation, or economic resources. Youth who join a gang often do so at an early age, between 11 and 15 years old, and usually go through an initiation to join.

What Are the Signs?

- Hanging out with a new group of friends
- Using unusual hand signs, nicknames, or street language
- Drawing strange symbols or graffiti on notebooks and folders
- Dressing in the same color clothing every day or wearing tattoos, unusual jewelry, hairstyles, or clothing that could identify a particular gang
- Carrying guns, knives, or other weapons

Where To Go For Help?

- Police Department
- Social Services, Child Protection, or Child Welfare Department
- Youth Prevention Programs
- Local Alcohol, Drug or Rehabilitation Program

INTERNET CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

What Is the Issue?

When predators entice children through online contact for the purpose of engaging them in sexual acts and/or exposing and encouraging them to create or exchange child pornography. The perpetrator does not need to have physical contact with the child to commit this kind of crime. Because of this, many victims of Internet crime do not even realize that they have been victimized. These crimes are less likely to be reported by victims and their families if the crime was committed by someone with a close relationship to the victim.

What Are the Signs?

- Child becomes withdrawn and isolated from family and friends
- You have found inappropriate material on a computer the youth has used
- The youth receives mail, money, or gifts from unknown people
- The family has reported they have noticed unknown numbers appearing on their monthly phone bill

Where To Go For Help?

- Police Department
- Social Services Department
- Social Services, Child Protection, or Child Welfare Department
- Indian Health Service

SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

What Is the Issue?

Sexual abuse is any situation where a child is used for sexual gratification. This may include sexual exploitation, when a child is manipulated or coerced into prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. This crime can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional, or physical control over a young person or peers, manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity. It is common for abusers to use games, gifts, lies, or threats to keep victims from telling anyone what has happened . This form of abuse is often misunderstood by victims and outsiders. Some victims are tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship.

What Are the Signs?

- Sudden change in demeanor that is hostile or demonstrates low self-esteem
- Sexual behavior that could include inappropriate touching or sexual language
- Injuries that appear as if they are from physical or sexual assault or physical restraint
- Self-destructive, risk taking, or regressive behavior *(e.g. needing to take a transitional object to school)*
- Fear of people of a specific gender

Where To Go For Help?

- Police Department
- Social Services, Child Protection, or Child Welfare Department
- Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Program
- Indian Health Service

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

What Is the Issue?

The most significant mental health issues among tribal youth are depression, anxiety, and suicide. Depression is a mood disorder that causes persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest and can lead to suicide. Depression or extreme anxiety may also cause a person to struggle with normal day-to-day activities. Contributing factors to depression and/or anxiety may include, but are not limited to, community and family relations, family medical history, age, and substance use. Alcohol, marijuana and other drugs often play a role in suicide attempts.

What Are the Signs?

Young children:

- Frequently sad, irritable, worried, or clingy
- Constant aches and pains
- Underweight
- Refuses to go to school

Teens:

- Frequently sad, irritable, or angry
- Low self- esteem, avoids social interaction, and loss of interest in normal activities
- Poor school performance or attendance
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Eats or sleeps a lot
- Physical markings that could be a result of self-harm, such as scars on their wrists

Where To Go For Help?

- Behavioral Health Services Department or Indian Health Service
- Mental Health Program or Counseling Center
- Local Alcohol, Drug or Rehabilitation Program

MISSING CHILDREN

What Is the Issue?

Children are considered missing when they are 17 years old or younger, their whereabouts are unknown for at least one hour, and their caretakers have tried to locate them. If a child is declared missing, the local police department can issue an AMBER Alert, a broadcasted emergency response that informs the general public of the missing child and identifying information so that they can contact the police department if they witness anything relevant. Children could be missing because they leave home without permission and stay away overnight or are told to leave the home without alternative care overnight. In other cases, children go missing when they are trying to return home but can't make contact because they are lost, stranded, or injured. A child may also be too young to know how to return home or contact their caretaker.

What Are the Signs?

- Child has not been seen by friends or family during regular activities *(e.g. school, sports teams, home, etc.)*
- Child has been gone for at least one hour with unknown whereabouts

Where To Go For Help?

- Police Department
- Social Services, Child Protection, or Child Welfare Department

CHILDREN AT-RISK FOR ABDUCTION

What Is the Issue?

(When a child, age 17 or under, is taken against their will by someone.) In most cases, the perpetrator takes the child in a vehicle. One third of all abductions occur when the child is going to or from school or school-related activities and most often involves female children ages 10–14. There are three types of abductions: **non-family abductions**, where a stranger takes the child; **family abductions**, when a family member violates a custody order and takes or fails to return a child; and **stereotypical kidnapping**, when a stranger takes a child and is kept overnight, transported 50 miles or more, held for ransom, or intended to be kept permanently. Perpetrators often entice children by offering a ride, candy, sweets, or money, asking the child questions, or using an animal to get the child's attention and interest.

What Are the Signs?

- An unwelcome stranger or family member observes the child from a distance
- A verbal exchange is witnessed between the stranger or family member and the child
- Any physical contact between the stranger or family member and the child
- Stranger or family member ignores a warning from the child's caretaker to stop all contact with the child

Where To Go For Help?

- Police Department
- Social Services, Child Protection, or Child Welfare Department

NATIONAL HOTLINES

National Hotlines are an important resource when you need additional information to understand if a youth you know is at-risk for any of the six key issues outlined in this booklet.

Below are several National Hotlines that can provide guidance on a variety of key issues affecting tribal youth.

National Youth Crisis Hotline
1-800-422-HOPE (4673)
Provides counseling and referrals to local drug treatment centers, shelters, and counseling services.

National Runaway Switchboard
1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929)
www.1800runaway.org
Preventing youth from running away or being homeless is one of the organization's main goals. Teachers, agency personnel, law enforcement officers, or anyone concerned about the well-being of a youth are encouraged to call to develop an action plan to prevent youth from developing at-risk behaviors.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. By dialing 1-800-273-TALK, the call is routed to the nearest crisis center where crisis counseling and mental health referrals are provided day and night.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
1-800-843-5678
www.missingkids.com
Contact this Center if you have information on a missing child or suspected child sexual exploitation. You can submit reports of suspected child sexual exploitation to the Center's CyberTipline® online at www.missingkids.com/cybertipline.

Parent Hotline
1-800-840-6537
www.parenthotline.net
The Parent Hotline is a resource for parents and youth service providers to help them identify warning signs of at-risk behavior among youth and assess what services youth might need, including interventions.

Indian Health Service
www.ihs.gov/findhealthcare
Though not a hotline, you can use this online locator to find the Indian Health Service center closest to you. The results will provide you with an address and phone number for the closest center, including behavioral health centers, hospitals, dental clinics, and general health clinics.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS SERVING TRIBAL YOUTH

These organizations serve tribal youth across the country and provide safe, nurturing, and productive environments and positive youth development programming.

Boys & Girls in Indian Country
At Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country, youth find a safe place to learn and grow, ongoing relationships with caring adult professionals, life-enhancing programs and character development experiences, and hope and opportunitity. Find a Club in Indian Country: http://www.naclubs.org/index.php/club-map.

4-H
4-H is the nation's largest youth development and empowerment organization, reaching more than 7 million youth in urban neighborhoods, suburban schoolyards and rural farming communities. Fueled by university-backed curriculum, 4-H'ers engage in hands-on learning activities in the areas of science, healthy living, and food security. Find a 4-H site: http://www.4-h.org/get-involved/find-4-h-clubs-camps-program.

National PAL
The National Police Athletic/Activities League (National PAL) is a juvenile crime prevention program that uses civic, athletic, recreational and educational activities to create trust and understanding between law enforcement and youth. Studies have shown that if a young person respects a police officer on the ball field, gym or classroom, youth will respect the laws that police officers enforce. Find a local PAL Chapter: http://nationalpal.org/chapters.

YouthBuild
In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work full-time for 6 to 24 months toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. Emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to each other's success. To find a YouthBuild program: https://youthbuild.org/siteview

The Tribal Youth Program
The **Tribal Youth Program** builds brighter futures for youth in Indian country by awarding grants through OJJDP to federally recognized tribes to develop and implement culturally sensitive youth programs that positively impact risk factors for delinquency, provide mental health program services, and support alcohol and substance abuse prevention programs. Find a program: http://www.tribalyouthprogram.org/program_list

Tribal Youth Police Academy (TYPA)
The **Tribal Youth Police Academy (TYPA)** is an annual event providing an excellent opportunity to explore law enforcement and other criminal justice careers. Academy students hear from tribal leaders and tribal police officers about the challenges facing Native American youth. Faculty, staff, and guest speakers share a commitment to support and mentor academy students. For the dates of next event e-mail: info@NCJTC.org

NOTES

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