

Midwives Serving Indian Country

The Indian Health Service (IHS) has employed nurse-midwives since 1969, when the first nurse-midwife was assigned to a remote village in Alaska. A 1973 study that examined nurse-midwifery care of Native Americans at an IHS clinic in Fort Defiance, Arizona demonstrated marked improvements in pregnancy outcomes after the first five years of nurse-midwifery care at the clinic.¹ This study, combined with midwives long history of caring for vulnerable populations and the recognition of midwifery care by leaders at IHS, have resulted in an interesting statistic: Of all ethnic subgroups, Native American women are more likely than others to deliver their infants under the care of midwives. In fact, Native American women are five times more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to obtain midwifery care.²

This document describes a number of resources for health care administrators interested in midwifery services, and for midwives interested in learning more about serving in Indian Country.

Certified Nurse-Midwives Serving Indian Country

This booklet from the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) provides a brief description of some of the midwifery practices in IHS hospitals and other sites. This document is available at http://www.midwife.org/siteFiles/education/IHS_booklet_07_09.pdf.

ACNM eMidwife Discussion List

ACNM members who are currently working with American Indian/Alaska Native families or are interested in learning more about opportunities in Indian Country can sign up for the eMidwife discussion list, Indian Health Midwives at <http://www.acnm.org/membership/emidwife.cfm>.

Indian Health Service (IHS)

The IHS provides a comprehensive health services delivery system for American Indians and Alaska Natives with opportunity for maximum tribal involvement in developing and managing programs to meet their health needs. The mission of the IHS, in partnership with American Indian and Alaska Native people, is to raise their physical, mental, social, and spiritual health to the highest level. The goal of the IHS is to ensure that comprehensive, culturally acceptable personal and public health services are available and accessible to all American Indian and Alaska Native people. For comprehensive information, visit www.ihs.gov.

The IHS offers a Loan Repayment Program (LRP) to help meet the staffing needs of IHS in Indian health programs. The Internet link for the IHS Division of Health Professions Support (DHPS) is: http://www.ihs.gov/JobCareerDevelop/DHPS/LRP/LRP_Index.asp. The DHPS includes: the Loan Repayment Program, IHS scholarships and IHS recruiting. Comprehensive information is available about the program terms, eligibility and application processes. Certified nurse-midwifery is considered a priority specialty.

In the LRP, applicants sign contractual agreements for 2 years and fulfill their agreements through full-time clinical practice at an IHS facility or approved Indian health program. In return, the LRP

will repay all or a portion of the applicant's eligible health professional educational loans (undergraduate and graduate) for tuition expenses. Applicants are eligible to have their educational loans repaid in amounts up to \$20,000 per year for each year of service. Questions can be directed to Paul Lofgren at 301-443-1795 or plofgren@hqe.ihs.gov.

National Indian Women's Health Resource Center

The National Indian Women's Health Resource Center (NIWHRC), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to assist American Indian and Alaska Native women in achieving and maintaining optimal health and cultural well-being for themselves, their families and their communities. Contact NIWHRC at 918-456-6094 or www.niwhrc.org.

Health Native Communities Fellowship

The Fellowship is an intense year long opportunity that develops leaders who are catalysts for positive change. Individuals apply as part of a team or group working towards improving Native community Health. To learn more and to get an application packet contact Marita Jones at 505-368-6567, healthycommunities@shiprock.ihs.gov, or write IHS National Prevention Initiative, PO Box 160 Shiprock NM 87420.

NDNS4Wellness. American Indian Prevention Coalition, Inc.

An American Indian owned and operated intertribal 501(c) 3 non-profit organization whose membership is to promote safe, successful, healthy and drug-free American Indian youth, families and communities on and off the reservations.

PO Box 25047 Phoenix, Arizona 85002; Phone 602-258-4477, www.ndns4wellness.org

“Face Up to Wake Up” SIDS Risk Reduction Resource Kit

Nationwide SIDS rates for infants of American Indian mothers are 2.6 times those of the non-Hispanic white mothers. The Don Imus-WFAN Pediatric Center has developed this resource kit for use by health and medical service providers. www.cjsids.com

References:

1. Ross, M. G. Health impact of a nurse midwife program. Nurs Res 1981 Nov-Dec;30(6):353-355.
2. Parker, J. D. Ethnic differences in midwife-attended US births. Am J Public Health 1994 Jul;84(7):1139-1141.

The ACNM “QuickInfo” series was developed by the Department of Professional Practice & Health Policy to respond to common inquiries by summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact our department at (240) 485-1844 or pphp@acnm.org. (Listing of other services and products does not imply endorsement by ACNM.) 8/5/05; Revised 3/06; 709