

Council for Social Work Education presentation – October 13, 2015

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casey family programs

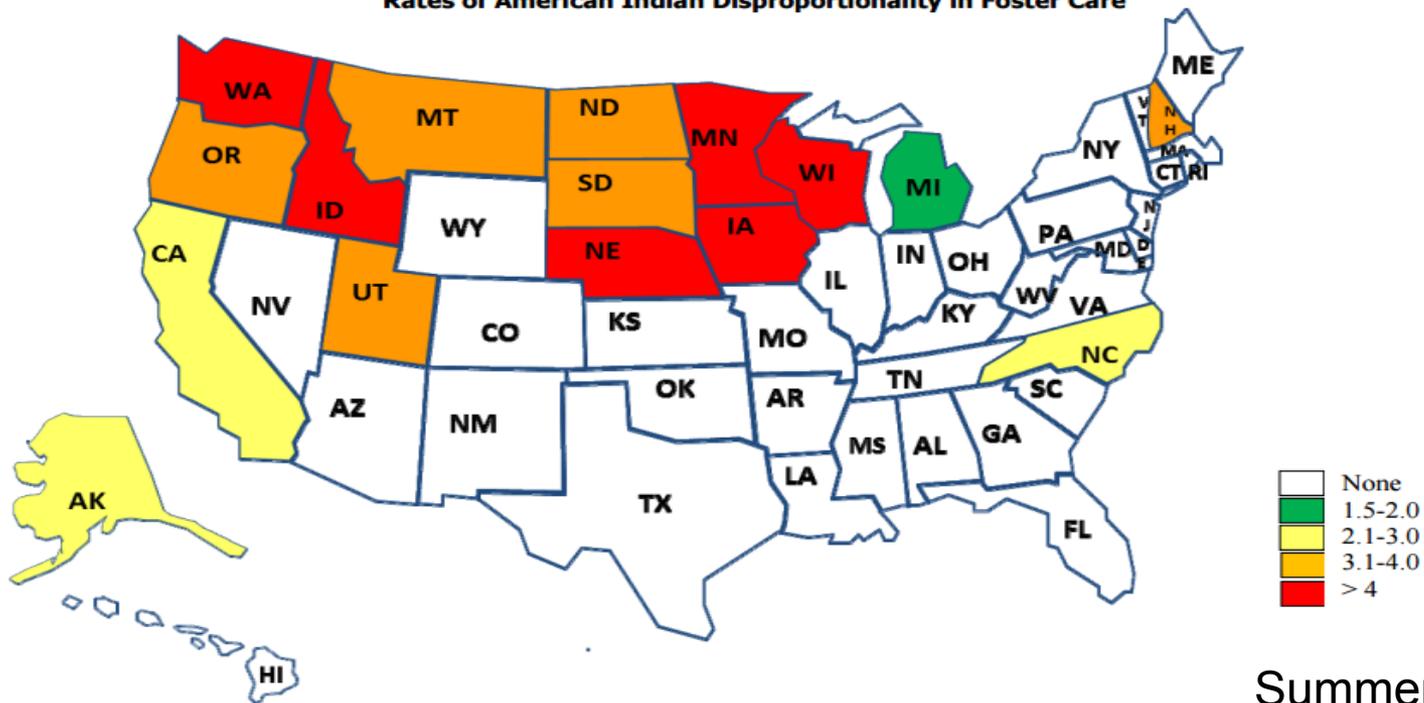
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Child Welfare Disproportionality: American Indian/Alaska Native children

Comparisons of Disproportionality by State American Indian/Alaska Native

Across the United States, American Indian/Alaska Native children are overrepresented in foster care at a rate of 2.4 times their rate in the general population. While not all states show disproportionality, 21 states do have some overrepresentation. Twenty-four percent of the states that have overrepresentation have a disproportionality index of greater than 4.1. In Minnesota, the disproportionality is index 13.9, in Washington State it is 4.3.

Rates of American Indian Disproportionality in Foster Care



How can Social Work Education Help Address Disproportionality – AI/AN Children

Ensure that the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is an important part of the curriculum.

Help students:

How can Social Work Education Help Address Disproportionality – AI/AN Children

- Understand the history behind and rationale for ICWA so that it is viewed as integral to the practice of child welfare, not a series of boxes to be checked when a child is Indian
 - History of widespread removals of Indian children as official and unofficial government policy by both the federal and state governments
 - Study in 1970s revealed that 25-35% of Indian people had been separated from their families at some point in time
 - Tribes are sovereign governments with a *parens patriae* interest in their children
 - Extended family networks in tribal communities are extensive and frequently play an important caretaking role in an Indian child's life

How can Social Work Education Help Address Disproportionality – AI/AN Children

- Recognize that to a substantial extent the provisions of ICWA are best practices from which all children and families can benefit
 - Active efforts to keep families together and strong presumption in favor of family preservation and reunification
 - Preferential placement with extended families and other families with a special connection to the child (e.g., other tribal families) when a child needs to be removed
 - Due process rights for parents in both involuntary and voluntary settings

How can Social Work Education Help Address Disproportionality – AI/AN Children

- Appreciate the tribal role in ICWA not only on a philosophical and legal basis, but also as a potential resource to keep children safely with their families or extended families whenever possible
 - Tribes may have access to resources and services to help children and families over and above that available from states
 - Tribes are often more familiar with the familial relationships and able to identify extended family members for support and/or placement more effectively than the state
 - Tribes can provide a culturally-sensitive and relevant perspective to state child welfare systems
 - Tribal court can fashion remedies that state courts cannot

For Further Information

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