

**MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALIST'S STANDARD
WHEN SERVING
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE POPULATIONS**

I. Standard Type

Operations

II. Standard

North Sound RSN/PHP/Contractors

III. Scope

All NSRSN/PHP-contracted Mental Health Specialists recognized by the Department of Social and Health Services of the State of Washington.

IV. Purpose(s)

To provide mental health providers with guidelines in identifying and utilizing American Indian/Alaskan Native Mental Health Specialists when providing services to American Indian/Alaskan Native populations as defined by Tribal law, customs and/or WAC.

V. Process/Procedures

A. Ethics

American Indian/Alaskan Native Specialists shall demonstrate:

1. The commitment and skill to work in a collaborative manner with any and all entities which may support the treatment of their Native American/Alaskan Native clients.
2. Responsibility is to his/her client. To this end, specialists must adhere to basic responsibilities such as placing the interests of their clients and prospective clients ahead of their own, maintaining independence of thought and action, holding the affairs of their clients in strict confidence, striving to continually improve their professional skills, advancing the professional standards of mental health specialists, and upholding the honor and dignity of the profession.

3. The commitment to protect the client's physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor their client's dignity and privacy.
4. Adherence to all applicable professional standards of integrity and competence.
5. Consideration of inclusion of secular healing practices into treatment and ensuring respect for the beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, and traditional rituals of clients.

B. Credentials must include at least one of the following:

1. Persons approved by American Indian/Alaskan Native Social/Health Services Department.
or
2. Academic and professional experience as defined in **WAC 388-865-0260**: *Qualifications appropriate to the needs of the American Indian/Alaskan Native consumer population.*
or
3. Persons approved by the Department of Health as mental health professionals.

C. American Indian/Alaskan Native Specialists should have Knowledge and understanding of the following:

1. Demographics of the group in which the specialist provides services; such as historical experiences, sociocultural, economic, political, geographic, religious, and linguistic characteristics.
2. Personal, familial, professional health and illness-related beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, rituals, and behaviors of both the recipient and the service provider.
3. The western medicine model and the impact of its assumptions regarding age, culture, gender and disability.
4. The alternative health sector (the lay, non-professional, non-specialist domain of society where ill health is first recognized and defined, and health care activities are initiated).
5. The traditional/spiritual health sector (non-professional, non-bureaucratic forms of healing that are either sacred, secular or both).

D. American Indian/Alaskan Native Specialist Responsibilities

Responsibilities of specialists in general:

1. American Indian/Alaskan Native Mental Health Specialists within the NSRSN/PHP Contract will adhere to Tribal law, customs, and RCW 18.19.060–Information Disclosure, whichever has the higher form of standard of protection.
2. Encourage and assist others in the principles and practice of competent services to American Indian/Alaskan Native populations.
3. Seek guidance from a Tribal Mental Health Provider, as necessary, to address a client’s traditional healing needs, or to enhance the overall quality of a client’s mental health services.
4. Continued education and training in the provision of services to the American Indian/Alaskan Native population in which they specialize.

E. NSRSN/PHP Contractor Responsibilities

1. Administrative Responsibility
 - a. Establish a NSRSN/Contractor culture of accommodation and excellence by utilizing panels with Tribal representation in all areas, including hiring processes.
 - b. Utilize a management information system capable of identifying and profiling client data for American Indian/Alaskan Native populations.
 - c. Demonstrate flexibility in funding and service provision as necessary to individualize care for eligible persons and meet the unique needs of American Indian/Alaskan Natives.
 - d. Ensure services are provided in an atmosphere that addresses American Indian/Alaskan Native clients’ need for familiarity, accessibility and comfort. Accommodation may include, but is not limited to, varied hours of operation, on-site visits and/or home visits.

2. Supervisory Responsibility:

- a. Demonstrate efforts in recruitment, employment, and retainment of American Indian/Alaskan Native Mental Health Specialists in numbers representative of, and as necessary to meet the needs of, the local American Indian/Alaskan Native population.
- b. When determining individual workload levels, will consider availability of diagnostic and treatment resources, extended time frames for cultural appropriateness, and the overall complexity involved in providing services to American Indian/Alaskan Native populations.
- c. When assigning clinicians, will strive to address the needs of clients by considering characteristics such as age, gender and cultural/traditional values.
- d. Assure there is a procedure in place to resolve conflicts when using specialists.

F. American Indian/Alaskan Native Specialists with Consultative Responsibility

1. Perform each consultation on an individualized basis and develop recommendations tailored specifically to meet the individual needs of the client.
2. Encourage, teach, and assist the referent with the principles, methods, and techniques involved in the provision of competent services to the American Indian/Alaskan Native population, and help assure that activities suggested and services implemented can be managed and continued.
3. Base services on diagnostic and treatment modalities that incorporate the values, traditions, and beliefs of the client.
4. Documentation shall exist between the referent and the American Indian/Alaskan Native Specialist regarding the objectives, scope, and fee schedule for a requested consultation. Discuss with the referent any important changes in the nature, scope, timing, or other aspects of a consultation and obtain the referent's agreement to such changes before taking action on them.

G. American Indian/Alaskan Native Specialists will be centrally accessible through an online regional directory

1. NSRSN/PHP contractors shall maintain financial responsibility when American Indian/Alaskan Native clients present for mental health treatment.
2. NSRSN/PHP contractors will offer all American Indian/Alaskan Native eligible clients American Indian/Alaskan Native consultation and provisions to needed cultural/traditional care by providing a competent American Indian/Alaskan Native Mental Health Specialist.