

RAPID CITY FAMILY PROJECT

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background and Overview

Research shows that there are high rates and negative outcomes of adverse child experiences (ACEs). ACEs include (but are not limited to) child abuse and neglect and exposure to domestic violence. The purpose of this project is to create a program for residents of Rapid City that will (1) **prevent** ACEs from happening and (2) **promote resilience** in children and caregivers who have experienced ACEs. We are also conducting research to see what the community thinks about the program (*Do families like it?*) and if the program is working (*Does the program prevent ACEs?*). The program focuses on youth ages 10 to 14 and their caregivers. The program was created for families in Rapid City who are Native American and/or struggling financially. The voices of youth and families have been at the center of developing the culturally grounded program and making sure the research procedures are safe and acceptable. This project is a multi-stakeholder collaboration that includes individuals at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (based in Rapid City) and agencies in Rapid City (e.g., WAVI, CHS).

Programming

The community named the strengths-focused, family-based, culturally grounded program ***Tiwahe Wicagwicayapi*** (Strengthening/Growing Families). Each of the seven sessions is named after a Lakota virtue. All sessions include Lakota language, history, and traditions. The program is taught by diverse individuals, mostly Native American adults. The program promotes family bonding and communication and the acquisition of skills to prevent ACEs. Each session begins with a traditional Lakota meal followed by mini break-out sessions for children and caregivers before families come back together at the end. Session activities include talking circles, arts and crafts, games, and cultural activities. Onsite daycare is provided for children who are under 10 and over 14. The program is offered on Sunday afternoons and weekday evenings at He Sapa Church in North Rapid.

Research

Families who would like to participate will be assigned by chance to take the program during the first group or take the program during the second group. Caregivers and children in first group will complete surveys before and 6 months after receiving the program. Caregivers and children in the second group will take surveys at these same times, and then receive the program. Families can receive over \$300 for being in the project. Research procedures and sharing project findings are overseen by institutional review boards and a Native Advisory Board. The purpose of the research is to make sure that the program is working like it is supposed to and help make the program better.

“A cornerstone of Lakota culture can be summed up in the words of family and kinship. Family is the backbone, the foundation of our culture. We are given substance, nurtured, and sustained by family. Kinship goes beyond family and is the connection we feel to the world at large and everything in it... A phrase essential to and used in all [Lakota] ceremonies is mitakuye oyasin which means all of my relatives. It’s definition reminds us of that connection.” -Joseph Marshall III (Lakota Elder)

If You Have Any Questions About This Research Project, Please Contact Us At

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