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Findings from the Safe Kids/Safe Streets National Evaluation Safe Kids/Safe Streets, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

PREPARED BY WESTAT, NATIONAL EVALUATOR FOR THE PROGRAM

Many studies suggest that child abuse and neglect are risk factors for the development of juvenile delinquency and other problem behaviors. The Safe Kids/Safe Streets (SK/SS) program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), was designed to break the cycle, by reducing child abuse and neglect through comprehensive, multifaceted strategies involving a wide array of community partners. Five demonstration sites were selected to implement the program, which began in 1997. The five communities hosting the program were Burlington, VT; Huntsville, AL; Kansas City, MO; Sault Ste. Marie, MI; and Toledo OH.¹

The grantee for the Sault Ste Marie, Safe Kids Safe Streets project is the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, located in the Eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Anishnabek Community and Family Services (ACFS), a Tribal social service agency, is the lead agency and grant fiduciary. This agency has responsibility for all child protection cases that involve a victim who lives on reservation/trust land and is governed by the Indian Child Welfare Act and the Child Welfare Code of the Tribe.²

The project—known as Building Strong Native American Families (BSNAF)—was awarded five grants of \$425,000 from 1997 to 2003; however, it did not expect to start using its fifth grant funds until September 2003. In 2003, OJP decided to provide a sixth award of \$125,000 per site to cover a final year of transition to non-Federal funding, but Sault Ste. Marie had not yet received it. Counting all awards, total funding for the SK/SS program in Sault Ste Marie will amount to \$2,250,000.

Planning

Planning for the program was led by a Stakeholders Advisory Group, which included a wide range of Tribal and non-Tribal agencies and representatives. Agency partners

¹ For more information about this program, see Gragg, F., Cronin, R., Schultz, D., Eisen, K. *National Evaluation of the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Program: Final Report. (Volumes I – IV)*. Rockville, MD: Westat, 2004.

² *Child Welfare Code of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians*, accessed at: <http://www.saulttribe.org/law/childwelfare.html>.

outside ACFS had not been involved in developing the proposal and first got involved in planning after the program award. This group submitted a draft Implementation Plan by December 1997. The project submitted a revised Implementation Plan, addressing OJP comments, in November 1998.

OJP's biggest concern about that initial Implementation Plan was it changed the Tribal focus by including both Tribal and non-Tribal agencies and organizations. Also, OJP staff felt that the plan did not adequately address the court's role in the child protection system and saw this as a major gap.

To further explore these issues, OJP arranged a TA site visit by the American Indian Development Associates (AIDA) in May 1998. OJP program officers conducted a follow-up visit to Sault Ste. Marie in July 1998 and arranged a second TA visit in October 1998, from a new provider, to assist with strategic planning. The new TA provider facilitated a "Visioning Experience" with representatives from all aspects of Tribal government, BSNAF staff, and OJP officials. The Visioning Experience focused on clarifying the Tribe's vision of its future and the role that BSNAF could play in achieving that vision. The Visioning Experience had the effect, at least in part, of getting BSNAF staff and Tribal agencies and officials more focused on changing the child welfare system to benefit Sault Tribe children and families. During the Visioning Experience, four key program strategies were identified—strategic planning to ensure a tribal future, working together to build a strong community, revitalizing traditional and spiritual values, and strengthening Anishnabe families.

BSNAF's revised Implementation Plan incorporated the feedback from OJP and the results from the Visioning Experience. While much of the revised plan was consistent with the original proposal, there were some significant changes. First, the plan added a number of new Tribal agencies to the collaborative—including the Tribal Court and Tribal Law Enforcement. Second, at OJP's insistence, the broad collaborative was reconfigured to focus on Tribal agencies, representatives, and Tribal members. Instead of a two-county program that involved leaders in Tribal, state, county, city, and private service agencies, BSNAF would be a reservation/trust-focused program. The target population would include families who were members of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and living in the seven counties in the Eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Project activities would initially focus on Chippewa and Mackinac Counties where there was a higher concentration of Tribal members. Later, as planned, the project expanded to Schoolcraft County, in what is commonly referred to as the Western service

end. Finally, the revised plan included a local evaluation description. OJP approved this Implementation Plan in May 1999.

Collaboration Building

Throughout the project, the official governing body for all Tribal activities, including those of SK/SS, was the 13-member Tribal Board of Directors. The Board is elected by the Tribe's general membership and must approve all policy statements, budgets, and strategic plans. While the Tribal Board represented the first tier of governance for the BSNAF project, the identity and membership composition of the second tier changed significantly over time. During the planning phase, the Stakeholders Advisory Group held this position. There were two later incarnations of the BSNAF collaborative.

- **The Tribal Human Services Collaborative (HSCB).** The Tribal HSCB emerged out of the revised Implementation Plan and the Visioning Experience of 1998 to embody the project's new Tribal focus.³ Created by authority of the Tribal Chairman and Board of Directors, the Tribal HSCB took over primary responsibility for approving program activities and setting program policy. The HSCB was intended to serve as a Tribal coordinating and policymaking body for all child and family services, with representatives from all the major Tribal agencies. In practice, it had difficulty attracting commitment and participation from the Tribal Board. Despite these limitations, the Tribal HSCB did help BSNAF with its early strategic planning and with training and public education. It also increased involvement and buy-in from some Tribal agencies and members.
- **Tribal Leadership and Management (TLM).** By the middle of 2001, ACFS and the Tribal Chairman decided to reorganize the project and put the collaborative under the joint leadership of the administrative director of ACFS and the deputy executive director of the Tribe. The reorganized structure was ultimately renamed Tribal Leadership and Management. While designed to serve as a mechanism for implementing the strategic plans of various agencies involved with children, youth, and families, the TLM also planned to monitor and provide ongoing strategic planning to BSNAF. The TLM was to be an inclusive planning body of key Tribal team members, combining resources to develop and implement Tribal plans and programming for the benefit of the membership and community. While the TLM got off to a good start, political strife within the Tribe's Board of Directors significantly stalled TLM efforts and constrained its decisionmaking abilities. Plans after June 2003 (when evaluation

³ The Tribal HSCB was modeled in part on a state approach. In 1995, a Michigan report, *Systems Reform for Children and Their Families*, recommended that each community have or develop a multipurpose collaborative body as a decisionmaking body to coordinate human services within the community. As a result, a multipurpose collaborative body (MPCB) was developed in Chippewa County and human services collaborative body (HSCB) was developed in Mackinaw County.

data collection ended) included reconvening the group under the new executive director of the Tribe and meeting bimonthly.

Implementation

Despite its lengthy planning process, BSNAF began some implementation in March 1998, when OJP released partial implementation funds to support programs on which there was community consensus. Full implementation of the BSNAF program occurred in 1999. . The activities undertaken under each of the four program elements required by OJP—system reform and accountability, continuum of services, data collection and evaluation, and prevention education and public information—were varied and extensive. Below we discuss the staffing for implementing the initiative, followed by highlights of the efforts implemented.

Staffing. A full-time project facilitator and an administrative assistant have staffed the BSNAF project throughout. In addition, SK/SS funds supported a half-time project director in the first 4 years of the project; in the last 2 years, his contribution to the project was provided “in kind” by the lead agency. The project also employed a special project assistant and two case managers, responsible for coordinating services for families in Chippewa and Mackinac County and in the Western service end. BSNAF also supported, on a part-time basis, an accounting assistant, a utilization facilitator, a juvenile law enforcement officer, and evaluation support staff. There was not significant staff turnover.

In addition, the project utilized subcontracts and consultants to carry out several activities, described in more detail below. The largest subcontract was with two consultants from Sovereignty Associates and the Southwest Healing Lodge, which facilitated the Community Healing Process over several years. Smaller subcontracts with Tribal agencies facilitated web site development (e.g., YooperAid), management information system efforts, and the public awareness and media campaign. A local evaluator was initially funded through a 1-year subcontract, but was eventually hired by ACFS as the clinical supervisor for the Western Service end.

System Reform and Accountability. In addition to developing the collaboration, BSNAF conducted a range of system reform activities, increasing its focus on this component as the project developed. Three efforts were cornerstones of the project: (1) the Community Healing Process, (2) professional training, and (3) developing a Tribal Children's Advocacy Center (CAC).

The primary objective of the Community Healing Process was “to train a core group of community members with information and skills to assist others to heal and grow in the knowledge, culture and traditions and spirituality of Bahwating Anishnabe people.”⁴ The Community Healing initiative was also expected to foster sharing of cultural resources across ACFS and other programs, thereby sustaining a “cultural foundation” for each program and Tribe-wide and, ultimately, incorporating cultural practices throughout the service delivery and treatment system. The project completed three training modules for Community Healing, involving a total of 42 training days, over 2 years: *What Was Never Told*, which established a common understanding of the community and its history; *Ethnostress*, which addressed internalized oppression and its impact on the cultural, social, and behavioral environment; and *Community Building*. The project expected to complete the fourth and last module, *Indigenous Ways of Helping/Healing* (36 training days), by December 2003. Complementing this work, the cultural specialist at ACFS coordinated regular cultural trainings for staff and worked to integrate traditional and spiritual values into ACFS programs.

The project’s major goals for professional development included standardizing the training curriculum for mandated child abuse and neglect reporters and incorporating the cultural values, norms, and practices of Native Americans into all training curricula. As part of these efforts, the project polled the provider community, identified specific risk factors and indicators of abuse and neglect, and published a brochure entitled *At Risk Factors and Reasonable Cause to Suspect Indicators*. In 2002, the project coordinated two interdisciplinary training sessions on the “Continuum of Community Responses to Child Abuse and Neglect” that drew large audiences, including both Tribal and non-Tribal service providers. The project ultimately developed a self-administered tutorial for mandated reporters available on a CD-ROM. All new Tribal employees now receive mandated reporter training in coordination with Tribal Human Resources.

The development of a Tribal CAC represents another key system reform effort. BSNAF received a \$15,000 planning grant from the National Children’s Alliance to support this effort. Several law enforcement, Child Placement Services, and medical staff received training at the National CAC Training Center on child abuse and basic and advanced forensic interviewing. After the Tribal CAC opened in 2002 at the ACFS office in Kincheloe, its staff began developing interagency agreements and protocols and started to provide forensic interviewing, therapy, family visitation, and intake and referral on site. The Tribe’s existing multidisciplinary team (MDT), which coordinates and plans investigations of child maltreatment, also started to meet at

⁴ The Community Healing Process vision and mission, as described in a seven part brochure series.

the CAC in 2002. On-site training conducted by Fox Valley Technical College helped the MDT to initiate strategic planning, encompassing its vision, mission, goals, and objectives.

Continuum of Services. BSNAF's primary service activities involved the design and implementation of the Family Service Team/Wraparound Program, staffed by SK/SS-supported caseworkers and a juvenile police officer in the Tribal school. BSNAF hired two caseworkers, one for Chippewa County and one for Schoolcraft County. The caseworkers worked out of ACFS' Behavioral Health Division, in tandem with the Children's Mental Health Initiative funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The position in Schoolcraft County enhanced collaboration and expanded services in the underserved, rural Western service area. As part of this overall effort, ACFS trained staff internally on service coordination and also used a national expert to train staff in the wraparound model. Implemented in 2002, the "treatment team model" included teams of clients, individuals whom the client identified as supportive, and service providers. This new mode of operating also helped to include non-Tribal agencies, such as the state child protective services (CPS), courts, and schools, in treatment planning for Tribal members. This is an important element, because it is estimated that nearly half of the child abuse and neglect cases served by the Tribe are initially identified by the state CPS system.

Data Collection and Evaluation. BSNAF struggled to develop a coordinated data collection and evaluation system from the time of its initial grant application. The project completed a Capacity Inventory and conducted youth focus groups. The project also began a case tracking study patterned after the Child Welfare League of America's Multisystem Case Analysis model. The effort was designed to examine the performance of the formal child protection system by tracking child abuse and neglect cases across agencies within that system. The project collected baseline data on 1998 cases from Child Placement Services, and planned to collect data from other agencies such as law enforcement, mental health, and the courts.

Prevention Education and Public Information. BSNAF successfully carried out two major prevention education and public awareness efforts which are described below.

- In response to the need for more public education on child maltreatment identified in the Capacity Inventory, BSNAF launched a culturally appropriate, comprehensive, and coordinated multimedia campaign, with four seasonal themes based on the Native American Medicine Wheel. The campaign developed over 20 culturally specific public service announcements (PSAs) that were carried on television and radio. The project competed with over 100 other entries and received four Excellence in Community Communications and

Outreach (ECCO) awards for its prevention education and public education efforts in 2002. The awards were sponsored by the Comprehensive Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program of the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), SAMHSA.

- In 2002, the project implemented “YOOPE RAID,” a user-friendly, on-line services directory that allows easy access to resource information, sources for assistance, event calendars, and maps of the seven-county service area.⁵ Special project assistants developed a membership services directory, also available on the Internet

Results

BSNAF succeeded in developing a program in line with OJP's broad vision for SK/SS. However, developing that program as intended (particularly integrating the four program elements into a unified system reform effort) took years, repeated clarification from OJP, and technical assistance. Additionally, when assessing the BSNAF project's results, it is important to note that it only moved into full implementation in 2000, and as of June 2003 still had full funding to carry it through most of 2004 (with transitional funding expected for the year after that). In addition, political upheaval within the Tribe had stalled progress on system reform efforts. On balance, however, the evidence suggests that it had made considerable progress.

Project Accomplishments. BSNAF's most successful efforts were in the areas of prevention education and public awareness and system reform. It also was able to address expanding the continuum of service. The project's wraparound family service treatment teams, which coordinate services and encourage family and client participation, promise to endure—especially with insurance reimbursement for many of the services on the horizon. A coordinated response for child victims of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse has been enhanced through an interdisciplinary communitywide training curriculum and monthly child abuse and neglect mandated reporter training in collaboration, which is open to all Tribal employees. The community at large continues to receive education about child abuse and neglect through the coordinated multimedia campaign. The Community Healing Process and the Tribal Children's Advocacy Center were significant system reform efforts.

Perhaps the most dramatic change affecting the entire spectrum of child abuse and neglect is that collaboration has become the normal way of doing business among many Tribal agencies. Many stakeholders and other key informants felt that BSNAF deserved a large share of

⁵ Yoooper is a local reference to residents of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

the credit for the increased collaboration. This is particularly important, because in our experience, once the collaboration process takes hold, it is hard to turn back—even though specific collaborations may come and go. In the same vein, the Community Healing process has infused new perspectives and approaches into many aspects of Tribal life and practice and has fostered the incorporation of cultural practices throughout the service delivery and treatment system. Both of these movements have changed the community climate in ways that would be difficult to reverse.

Local Perspectives on Accomplishments. Key informants, interviewed in 2002, reported that increased collaboration between agencies that traditionally had not worked together, for example ACFS and Victim Services, Law Enforcement, and the Tribal Court was a direct result of the SK/SS project. Others referred to improved communication between the lead agency and the Tribal Board of Directors. The Community Healing process, the public education campaign on child abuse and neglect, and YOOPEAID were cited as the project's most important accomplishments.

The five most important improvements cited by respondents to the 2003 Stakeholders Survey (N=55) included:

- Educating community residents, including parents, about child abuse and neglect (51%),
- Making professionals/services more sensitive to the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the children and families they serve (62%),
- Improving communication/cooperation among those who deal with child abuse and neglect (61%),
- Improving multiagency responses to children affected by domestic violence (61%), and
- Reaching underserved rural areas (51%).

The 2002 Survey of Agency Professionals (N=32), which surveyed frontline staff in ACFS, Tribal Law Enforcement, school counselors and principals in the public schools, and employees within the Tribal Court system reported:

- Improved knowledge of whom to contact in other agencies (74% of respondents),
- Closer relationships with the staff of the other agencies (58%),

- Improvements in cross-agency coordination (47%), and
- Improved recognition by professionals of abuse (41%).

Factors Affecting Project Success. Many factors influenced program development and progress. The following factors had a positive impact on the project:

- **Tribal leadership support.** The BSNAF staff had the support of the Tribal chairman and members of the Board of Directors. This support was evident in the willingness of the Tribal chairman to appoint the executive director to chair the TLM collaborative.
- **Committed and experienced staff.** BSNAF's core staff were committed to the success of the project and very solicitous of input from collaboration members. This responsiveness to collaboration members allowed the project to successfully involve a wide variety of agencies/organizations in program planning.
- **Lead agency.** The lead agency for BSNAF had credibility in the community regarding child abuse and neglect issues. The agency played a central role in the investigation of child abuse and neglect cases for Tribal members living on trust/reservation land. Moreover, it had excellent relationships with state agencies in investigating and providing treatment for Tribal members who live off trust/reservation land.
- **Commitment to revitalization of cultural and spiritual values and traditions.** The Community Healing process provided an integral source of critical knowledge and personal growth for the participants and strongly supported the project's goal of permanently incorporating cultural practices and values into the foundation of all Tribal programs. The project used the process to draw participation from the Tribe's various geographic areas and include both employees and community members learning side by side with traditional practitioners and spiritual leaders. The train-the-trainer format and mixed professional/community participation helped to spread an awareness and understanding of healing from violence with the community at large.

BSNAF also faced a number of challenges.

- **Involvement of Tribal justice system agencies and personnel.** OJP required that the justice system be a partner in SK/SS, but relationships with the Tribal Courts and Tribal Law Enforcement needed strengthening. Additionally, the recent introduction of defense attorneys into a relatively young Tribal Court system required a lot of adjustment by the judge, prosecutor, and child protection workers.

- **Maintaining momentum.** The collaboration lost momentum at various times, in part as a result of shifting to a Tribal-only collaborative. Some stakeholders reported frustration with the amount of time spent on planning. The collaboration was not able to produce enough tangible products for stakeholders, which had a negative effect on commitment and enthusiasm from key agencies.
- **Evaluation capacity.** ACFS as an agency had limited experience with program evaluation, and was reluctant to hire a consultant to develop an integrated, sustainable evaluation plan or to analyze existing data once they were collected. Thus, the project lacked ongoing feedback on its progress and potential problems.
- **Data reporting.** The Tribe as whole does not have any systemic ability to report data on Tribal members, other than the number of members and their age and sex distribution. Thus, the project lacked information on basic indicators of child well-being – reports of child abuse and neglect, incidence of child abuse and neglect, rates of juvenile delinquency, rates of Tribal high school dropouts, employment, and poverty.
- **Service orientation.** It was difficult to overcome the services orientation of ACFS and other agencies that generally expected grants to fund direct services. It was difficult to educate the community and other agencies on the system reform approach of BSNAF. It was also difficult to overcome negative perceptions of the lead agency that came from individual experiences with nonvoluntary services, such as child protective services.
- **Management turnover in Child Placement Services.** Unlike the other SK/SS sites, in Sault Ste. Marie Child Placement Services never became a significant partner. A primary obstacle was the lack of stable leadership in the division, as CPS had three different division directors over the life of the SK/SS project and was without a director for significant periods of time.