



The Challenges Our Youth Face

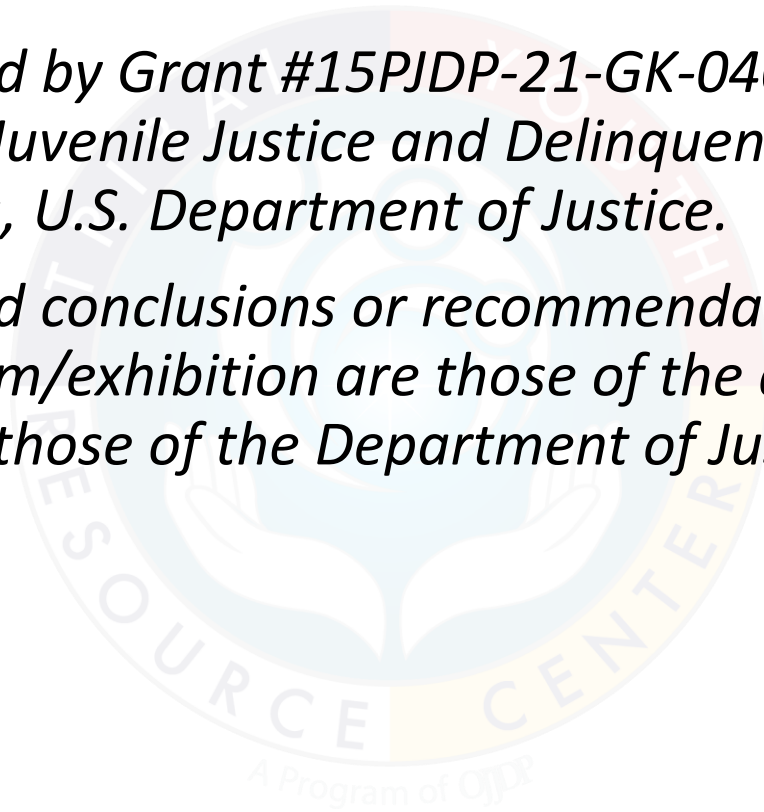
Identifying Trouble Areas While Using a Trauma-Informed Lens



Tribal Youth Resource Center
www.TribalYouth.org

▶ BEFORE WE GET STARTED...

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▶ LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the challenges that our 21st Century Tribal Youth are facing
2. Consider the impacts of the pandemic
3. Understand the overwhelming surge in drug activity
4. Understand the complexities of the legalization and availability of drugs
5. Consider the issues surrounding academic and social recovery

▶ THE CHALLENGES NATIVE/TRIBAL YOUTH FACE

1. There is no question that our Native/Tribal Youth are confronted with unprecedented social and societal changes
2. Try to remember a time where we have had this orchestra of simultaneous social change and community challenges (think of the assimilation (boarding school) and termination eras!)
3. Needless to say, recovery has been slow
4. It will be very important to interact with youth through a “Trauma-Informed Lens”
5. Communities experiencing rapid growth typically enter a period of generalized crisis and loss of traditional routines and attitudes (a.k.a., "Social Disruption Theory")

▶ SOCIAL DISRUPTION THEORY

- Rapid community change based on increases of social and societal challenges theoretically will increase community disruption, often leading to an increase in criminal activity and delinquency, even in rural settings.
- However, the challenge is that the community youth become victims of these changes as the community seeks to find solutions.

▶ IMPACT OF THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

- The worldwide pandemic ended both the educational and community social contact network for tribal youth
- Communities scrambled to prioritize responses, leaving many youth searching for outlets
- Our youth internalized social issues, while seeing their families struggle through the loss of loved ones
- Others dove into social media and technology with the hopes of trying to stay connected

▶ SURGING DRUG ACTIVITY

- Coping skills became a priority and with the public health sector being occupied with the pandemic, many people lost their primary care physician during the crisis
- Others were shut off and turned to self medication (many cite the pandemic as a major factor in the current surge of substance use and abuse)
- Native/Tribal Youth were left to navigate the drug problems within their communities while feeling isolated and despondent

▶ LEGALIZATION AND AVAILABILITY

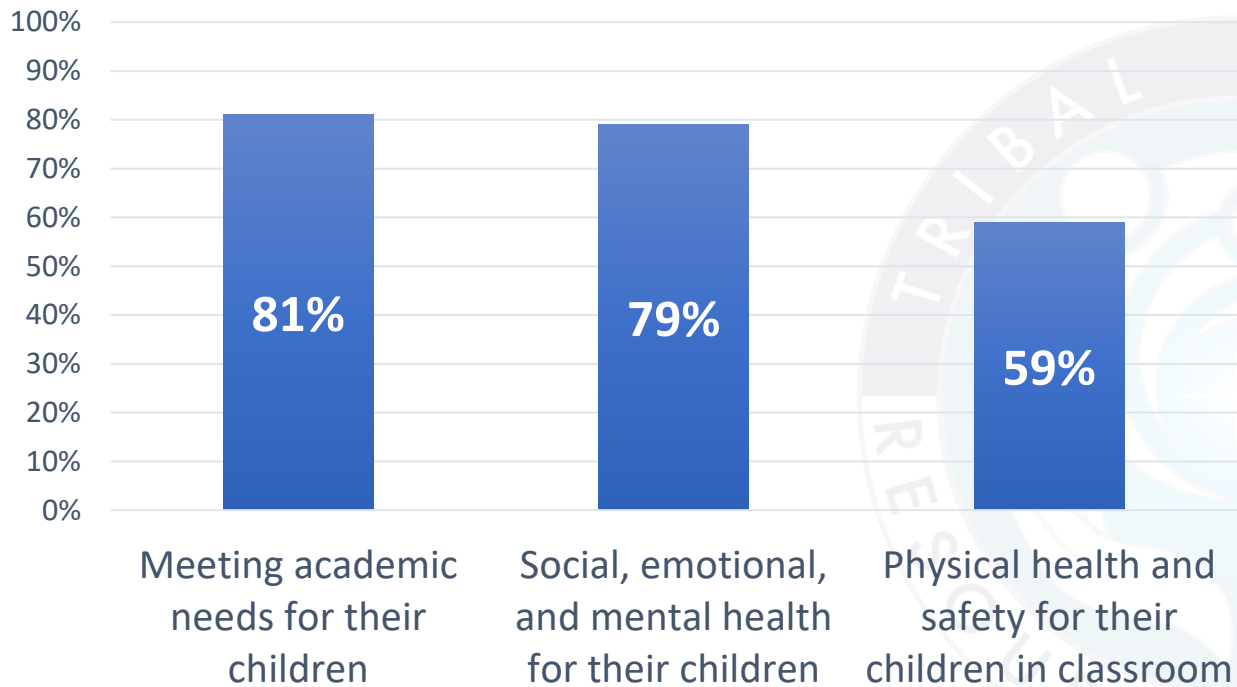
- Many tribal communities have witnessed a growth industry in cannabis products and in recreational marijuana use
- The vaping industry has also increased sales to young adults and those in the Gen Z age range
- There has also been a 1600% increase in vaping for young adults between the ages of 25 to 34
- Vaping activity has increased from 11% to 25% for high school seniors and from 8% to 20% for 8th graders and high school freshman

▶ ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL RECOVERY

- Meeting parent and youth needs have challenged many communities since the pandemic
- The reopening of educational institutions brought on additional challenges (many would argue that just the response provided additional stressor for Tribal youth)
- Native/Tribal youth and families slowly returned to school out of concern for basic safety and academic preparation
- The following graphic illustrates the sense of unease that still exists!

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS WHERE PARENTS AND STUDENTS EXPRESSED SOME DEGREE OF CONCERN ON SELECTED TOPICS: MARCH 2022

Parent Concerns



Student Concerns



Note: Schools were asked to report concerns expressed by parents and students. Thus, [this] data [is] school reported, not direct reports from parents and students. While the results presented in this indicator have been weighted and adjusted for nonresponse, [this] experimental data should be interpreted with caution. Experimental data may not meet all NCES quality standards. For a complete view of the results, visit the Parents, Students, and Staff Concerns section of the School Pulse Panel dashboard.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, School Pulse Panel (March 2022).



▶ CONCLUSION

- Tribal youth are faced with challenging times
- Our effectiveness will be dependent on our training and our patience, proper screening and assessment, and the services and supports that we provide to our Native/Tribal Youth
- During a recent site visit, I had the opportunity to listen to youth and program personnel discuss these and other challenges
- The main theme was that there was a great desire to provide support and to show youth that their community CARES!