

Section 2: Findings – does not reference Alaska Native/American Indian data sources such as the Attorney General’s Task Force on AN/AI Children Exposed to Violence, National Indian Child Trauma Center, etc. Alaska MCH (Jaren Parrish, PhD) has specific Alaska Native data on ACES issues also.

Title I. Section 101 – First, I don’t believe another task force is needed to investigate and document the best practices on trauma informed response. Agency staff and/or consultants can compile the extensive information and then convene a group of combined agencies and public citizens with expertise in the field to examine it further and make recommendations related to policy, funding and practices that might guide distribution of federal \$.

Having a task force made up of federal bureaucrats would not, in my opinion, lead to needed changes and the public trust needed to embrace these changes. In my experience, teams/task forces of federal agency representatives only is about the same as a “fox guarding a hen house” when it comes to accountability, especially on matters as they affect marginalized people and revisions to policy, practice and funding allocations. There should be an expert “citizen” co-chair, such as Dr. Bruce Perry or Dr. Dan Siegel, and the federal agency co-chair should be an individual who actually has experienced direct work with children and families rather than a career bureaucrat.

(d) Best practices. The current language calls for holding one public meeting (B)(ii) – this provision needs to require public meetings to be held in at least 4 regions, one to be Alaska, and for 2 of the 4 meetings to be held in an area easily (and affordably) near Indian Country because AI/AN are already overrepresented in the data and underrepresented in the structure of the Task Force membership. (NOTE: You cannot assume that the federal agency staff members from DOI or DOE with responsibility for serving AI/AN are either Native or have experience with serving Tribal communities directly.)

While the term “cultural sensitivity” is used to describe the scope of information to be considered, that term does not acknowledge the importance of cultural accountability and practice-based-evidence needed to assure that the practices to be reviewed are truly based in culture, rather than western-driven practices that are being used in non-western cultures (and being measured using western standards and approaches). It is essential that the Task Force have a balance of members who represent non-western cultures that have been oppressed, traumatized and marginalized to prevent the outcomes of this effort from being more reinforcement for western approaches to trauma-informed practices.

Final thoughts: I remain skeptical of yet another high dollar funded effort to collect information that is already developed and fund more meetings and discussions so yet another group of professionals can become educated about trauma-informed responses while people doing the work in the field continue to struggle for enough funded resources to do what they know needs to be done. In my opinion, a better approach would be to require all of these agencies to educate themselves and read/review all the existing literature and data and develop policies and practices to mandate their staff and grantees to adhere to the best practices that have been identified and to hold each other accountable.