



National Indian Head Start Directors Association

Standing Strong and Preserving the Identity of AIAN Children and Families

American Indian Alaska Native Child Advocacy Fund

The National Indian Head Start Directors Association established the American Indian Alaska Native Child Advocacy Fund in 2004 to support the Association's education and advocacy efforts on improving federal legislation and developing effective regulations benefiting over 24,000 American Indian and Alaska Native children and their families. These efforts focus on regulatory reform, expanding services, culturally appropriate instruction, and funding for facilities.

Our efforts at the national level have contributed to keeping AIAN Head Start and Early Head Start issues and concerns in the forefront of Congress and the Office of Head Start. We were highly successful in having 40 provisions for AIAN Head Start and Early Head Start programs included in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. With upcoming reauthorization it is critical to have a strong voice.

Strengthening and expanding programs is important to AIAN Head Start's continued success. AIAN Head Start programs provide critical services, often in extremely difficult circumstances. Despite the critical services that Indian Head Start provides to tribal communities, only about 16 percent of the age-eligible Indian child population is enrolled in Indian Head Start. Of the approximately 567 federally recognized Tribes, only about 188 have Head Start programs funded through 154 grantees in 26 states. That means approximately 379 Tribes do not have Head start available.

AIAN Head Start is on the frontline in the preservation of Native language and culture, which have proven to be key elements in Native student confidence and success in later years. AIAN Head Start is deeply committed to providing excellent programs. However, there needs to be further dialogue about developing reliable measurements of program quality in culturally diverse environments.

Many AIAN Head Start programs operate out of the oldest buildings on their reservations. Lack of adequate physical facilities hinders the ability of these programs to meet the very specific health and safety needs of young children. Many programs are unable to apply for expansion funds due to the limited availability of facilities in tribal communities. Without the necessary physical infrastructure, programs struggle to furnish the foundation for success that AIAN Head Start seeks to provide.

How Much is Needed?

NIHSDA's annual goal is \$38,000. Your support will allow NIHSDA to:

- Research and draft briefing documents, including background materials, letters and testimony and, when appropriate, legislative language
- Educate decision makers on the issues of importance to AIAN Head Start
- Provide education and leadership development to Head Start Parents and facilitate advocacy opportunities in D.C.
- Review legal, legislative and administrative developments for their impact on AIAN programs and respond with appropriate comments
- Respond to Congressional and Administration requests for information and for policy views and issues
- Prepare for and meet with government officials
- Hold webinars, briefings and other events intended to educate the NIHSDA membership as well as others on AIAN Head Start issues
- Develop policy positions
- Attend hearings
- Coordinate with other Early Childhood Education partners

Every dollar donated makes a difference in our struggle to improve and expand Head Start services for Indian children and families.

Ways You Can Donate:

The support and contributions of the AIAN Head Start network have helped to carry forth our education and advocacy efforts. Remember that while federal funds cannot be used to support lobbying efforts, unrestricted Tribal dollars and fundraising dollars can be used.

Donations can be made online at nihsda.org or using the attached donation form.