



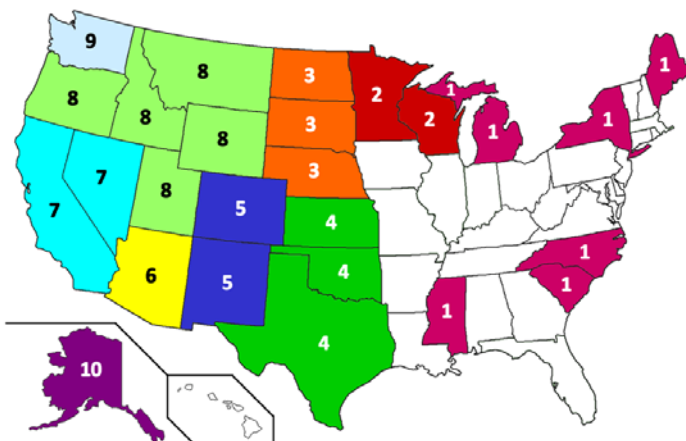
National Indian Head Start Directors Association

Standing Strong and Preserving the Identity of AIAN Children and Families

Who We Are

NIHSDA is the nation's leading voice for American Indian Alaska Native Head Start programs. The areas in which the association focuses its work include: advocating for federal legislative and regulatory improvements so that early childhood development and education services are culturally appropriate and relevant; as well as providing management training opportunities for program directors and management staff of HS/EHS programs to build the leadership capacity of local programs. NIHSDA is the only national organization which represents AIAN Head Start and Early Head Start programs exclusively. While NIHSDA partners with the National Head Start Association (NHSA), we are a separate organization, and our concentration is on AIAN grantees.

Membership into NIHSDA is open to the directors of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start and Early Head Start programs administered by federally recognized tribal governments. All other individuals or organizations may join NIHSDA as a corporate or associate member. The membership represents diverse populations, and although there are many observable similarities, the cultural practices, languages, belief systems, and governmental structures are varied. The association through its activities serves approximately 7,129 staff representing 216 federally recognized Indian tribes, Rancherias, and Alaska Native villages. The maximum membership consists of 155 AIAN Head Start/Early Head Start grantees operating within 26 states. Prevalently, the services provided are remote, isolated, and are a substantial distance from major metropolitan areas. Several are not directly accessible by road. AIAN Head Start and Early Head Start programs span the continental United States and Alaska. The service areas of programs vary in size from a single community to expansive agencies that span many counties and multiple states. Some AIAN Head Start centers are located over 100 miles away from the program's central offices.



NIHSDA Membership Zones: Zone 1 (Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina), Zone 2 (Minnesota, Wisconsin), Zone 3 (Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota), Zone 4 (Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas), Zone 5 (Colorado, New Mexico), Zone 6 (Arizona, Navajo), Zone 7 (California, Nevada), Zone 8 (Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Wyoming), Zone 9 (Washington), Zone 10 (Alaska).

Purpose

To remain the leading voice for AIAN children in Head Start programs, the National Indian Head Start Directors Association strives to preserve and respect indigenous identity, while actively providing high-quality advocacy, leadership development, and professional growth opportunities to current and future early care and education leaders.

Principles

NIHSDA adheres to the following four principles:

- Equitable quality services for all AIAN children and their families;
- Empowered Head Start programs and Tribal leadership that advocate for AIAN children and families,
- Collaborative partnerships with national organizations and stakeholders, and
- Effective, high-quality support and training opportunities for AIAN grantees.

Vision

NIHSDA will be a primary and dynamic source of increased wellness, education, professional development and strong role models for our AIAN children, families and staff through:

- Support and advocacy for culturally relevant services in AIAN communities;
- Innovative and comprehensive services that assist programs to build the capacity to develop school readiness skills;
- Flexible, responsive, community-based programs that encourage family engagement; and
- Effective partnership with the Office of Head Start.

NIHSDA's History

The National Indian Head Start Directors Association was formed in 1979 by American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start Directors during a training conference in Denver, Colorado. The association was established to create an organized voice for Indian Head Start programs and the children and families they serve.

The first president of the Association was Yvonne Bushyhead from Cherokee Nation (1979-1984). She served in this capacity for 4 years and was instrumental in establishing the foundation of the Association.

In 1980 the Association conducted its first Management Training Conference in Washington, D.C. the focus of which was the management and development of effective and efficient Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The Association has held a Head Start management training conference annually since 1980.

In 1990 the Association developed their first Advocacy Agenda. The Agenda was a powerful tool for the Association and was used for providing information and education on the needs of Indian children and families and the needs of local programs in affecting quality services at the federal agency and congressional levels.

During 1993/1994 the Association was honored by the National Head Start Association and was given the Region of the Year Award. The Association was also instrumental in having the first U.S. Senate Hearing on Indian Head Start which drew attention to the needs of American Indian Head Start programs, and a number of key changes and additions were made in the Head Start Act Reauthorization of 1994. One such change was the provision to allow AIAN programs to enroll more children who are over-income, as long as the programs predominantly serve income-eligible children.

In 1998 the Board incorporated as a non-profit (501 (c)(3) in the State of Oklahoma and continued to build its administrative and management structures and entered into an agreement with Three Feathers Associates Management Consultant Service.

In 2003 the Association partnered with Gregory Smith, attorney and lobbyist in Washington, DC. and began work on the next reauthorization of the Head Start Act.

The Association started a member's listserv in 2004 to allow program directors to more effectively collaborate and share resources. Also that year the Council of Professional Recognition recognized NIHSDA as a qualifying organization for CDA candidates/renewals.

In 2007, the Head Start Act was reauthorized and NIHSDA was instrumental in the addition of 32 new, as well as the retention of 9 previous, AIAN specific laws. It specified that the Office of Head Start would conduct an annual consultation with tribal governments operating programs. The first consultations were held in 2009.

In 2013, for the first time, NIHSDA and TRC (Tribal Early Childhood Research Center) became actively involved in the redesign of Family and Child Experiences Study (FACES) with the inclusion of AIAN grantees.

Throughout its history NIHSDA has partnered and worked closely with several organizations: National Head Start Association (NHSA), National Migrant Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA), Northwest Indian Head Start Coalition (NWIHSC), Southwest Consortium of Indian Head Start Programs (SWC), National Indian Child Care Association (NICCA), National Indian Education Association (NIEA), and National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

NIHSDA continues to educate and advocate for legislative and administrative changes that benefit AIAN children and families and will strive to provide AIAN Head Start programs with professional development training to strengthen their capacity in providing quality services.