



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**
SERVICES, INC.

American Psychological Association Services, Inc.
Public Witness Written Testimony Submitted June 12, 2025
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to the
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Addressing Indian Health Services
Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations

Chair Murkowski, Ranking Member Merkley, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, the American Psychological Association Services (APA Services), Inc. appreciates and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations. We respectfully request: \$8.6 billion for the Indian Health Service; \$140.8 million for mental health services; \$282.4 million for alcohol and substance use programs; and \$89.3 million for the Indian Health Professions.

APA Services is the companion organization of the American Psychological Association, which is the nation's largest scientific and professional nonprofit organization representing the discipline and profession of psychology, as well as over 173,000 members and affiliates who are clinicians, researchers, educators, consultants, and students in psychological science. Through the application of psychological science and practice, our association's mission is to make a positive impact on critical societal issues across the states. Many programs funded in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill provide essential support for our nation's public health programs by helping to provide critical access to essential mental and behavioral health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN).

We are grateful for the Subcommittee's past leadership in making bipartisan investments in behavioral health services and psychological science. Support for behavioral health services is a crucial investment in addressing chronic disease, population health, wellness, and resilience. We must reverse the accumulation of decades of neglect, stigma, and unequal treatment of behavioral healthcare that has led our nation into a health crisis, especially for communities such as Native American communities. To this end, federal investments in behavioral health services are critical to developing evidence-based practices in behavioral health, informing policy, and contributing to the development of effective behavioral health interventions in American Indians and Alaska Natives programs such as the American Indians Into Psychology Program (IN PSYCH) detailed below.

Funding Requests for Fiscal Year 2026

The programs under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction are fundamental to the health, education, and well-being of all Americans. From early childhood, investments in Native American communities' health, as well as public health initiatives for all vulnerable populations are crucial in ensuring that all Americans can thrive. For example, strong investments in programs within the Indian Health Service (IHS) that support Native American physical and mental health, alcohol and substance challenges and Indian health professions such as psychology, will ensure our nation will be able to meet the shortages of qualified behavioral health providers nationwide. Also, children and adults in all communities will have access to adequate healthcare. APA Services urges the Subcommittee to prioritize funding of these programs and consider the long-term benefits of these investments. For these reasons, APA Services urges the Subcommittee to prioritize funding of the programs below.

Indian Health Service

APA Services urges Congress to provide at least \$8.6 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS). The IHS provides federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). As the main federal health care provider for AI/AN people, its main goal is to improve the health care for Native Americans to the highest extent possible. The agency provides a health service delivery system for approximately 2.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives who belong to the 574 federally recognized tribes.¹ In fiscal year, 2023, there were 13,949,733 outpatient visits and 36,959 inpatient admissions at tribal and IHS facilities.²

American Indian life expectancy (65.2 years) is over 10.9 years less than that for the U.S. general population (76.1 years). Furthermore, death rates are significantly higher in many areas for American Indians compared to the U.S. general population, including: high rates of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis; diabetes; mellitus, unintentional injuries; assault/homicide; intentional self-harm/suicide; and chronic lower respiratory disease.³ ⁴ Brief psychological interventions provided within integrated primary and behavioral health service models have demonstrated effectiveness in improving symptoms of insomnia and reducing suicidal ideation, and for

¹ Indian Health Service, (October 2019). Indian Health Disparities. Retrieved from: <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/>.

² Indian Health Service, (October, 2024). Indian Health Service: A Quick Look. Retrieved from: https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/factsheets/QuickLook.pdf.

³ Ibid (2024)

⁴ Ibid (2024)

managing chronic pain.⁵ Integrated care has also been demonstrated to improve outcomes for both diabetes management and depression symptomatology, relative to standard care, in patients with one or more of the chronic conditions of diabetes, depression, hypertension, or obesity.⁶

Therefore, increased funding for programs within IHS is essential since this population has a life expectancy of approximately 5.5 years less than the U.S. all races population and often has a disproportionate disease burden when compared to other populations.⁷

Mental Health

Within the Indian Health Services, APA Services recommends \$140.8 million be allocated to mental health services. This program is currently funded at \$129.8 million. AI/AN communities often lack access to adequate health care, including behavioral health. Particularly striking are the suicide rates among adolescents and young adults in these communities. Suicide rates for AI/AN individuals between the age of 15 to 24 years old was 39.7 per 100,000, compared with the overall U.S. rate of 9.9 per 100,000. This rate is more than 3 and half times the suicide rate for males of all races in the age group. The suicide rate for AI/AN females in the same age group was lower than males at 20.2 per 100,000. However, this rate was still nearly six times the rate for females of all races.⁸ About three quarters (74.6%) of AI/AN suicide decedents were under the age of 44, compared to less than half (46.5%) of non AI/AN decedents.⁹

Alcohol and Substance Use

Within the IHS, APA Services requests at least \$282.4 million be allocated to alcohol and substance use programs. This program is currently funded at \$266.6 million. High rates of alcohol and substance use in AI/AN communities are well documented.¹⁰ This serious behavioral health issue has a strong impact on the health of individuals and families. AI/AN communities are much more likely to report alcohol and substance use disorders than any other race.¹¹

⁵ Funderburk, J. S., Shepardson, R., Beehler, G., Possemato, K., Perry, K., Shook, C., ... & Dollar, K. (2025). Improving the Quality of Veteran Health Care by Optimizing VA Integrated Primary Care: 20 Years and Beyond of the Center for Integrated Healthcare. *The Journal of Integrated Primary Care*, 2(1), 1

⁶ Wolff, L. S., Flynn, A., Xuan, Z., Errichetti, K. S., Walker, S. T., & Brodesky, M. K. (2021). The effect of integrating primary care and mental health services on diabetes and depression: A multi-site impact evaluation on the US-Mexico Border. *Medical Care*, 59(1), 67-76.

⁷ Ibid.(2019)

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (2017). Suicide Clusters within American Indian and Alaska Native Communities: A review of the literature and recommendations. HHS Publication No. SMA17-5050. Rockville, MD. Retrieved from: <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma17-5050.pdf>.

⁹ Stone, D., Trinh E., Zhou, H., Welder, L., End of Horn, P., Fowler, K., Ivey-Stephenson, A., (September 2022). Suicides Among American Indian or Alaska Native Persons- National Violent Death Reporting System, United States 2015-2020. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 2022; 71:1161-1168. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7137a1.htm>.

¹⁰ Indian Health Service, (2023). Behavioral Health. Retrieved from: https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/factsheets/BehavioralHealth.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

This population is also more likely to require alcohol use treatment than persons in any other ethnic group.¹² These programs can be extremely helpful for individuals struggling with alcohol addiction, especially when there is often a lack of availability of culturally sensitive treatment programs.¹³ The IHS is especially positioned to ensure such programs contain culturally sensitive components in the treatment plans.

Indian Health Professions

Within the IHS, APA Services requests \$89.3 million for the Indian Health Professions account. This program is currently funded at \$80.6 million. It is essential to have psychologists who are aware of the cultural sensitivities of this community and can best address its needs. The Indian Health Professions account includes the American Indians Into Psychology Program (INPSYC). The primary goals of the program are to increase the number of AI/AN with doctoral degrees in psychology and enhance the cross-cultural understanding and competence of AI/AN psychology programs. Together, these aims will help ensure the development and maintenance of AI/AN psychology career recruitment programs that encourage AI/AN to enter the field of psychology.

More specifically, the program recruits and trains individuals to be psychologists. It also provides scholarships to individuals enrolled in schools of clinical psychology to pay tuition, for books, fees and stipends for living expenses. Additionally, the program seeks to directly engage tribal communities to provide greater exposure to the field of psychology. Finally, the program provides stipends to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing careers in psychology and training opportunities for psychology graduate students in tribal communities.¹⁴ With the higher rates of suicide and other behavioral health concerns for this community, APA Services values the importance of increasing the number of AI/AN psychologists.

Conclusion

APA Services thanks the Subcommittee for the opportunity to share our Fiscal Year 2026 requests. APA Services stands ready to help Congress combat chronic disease, address suicide prevention and broader behavioral health needs for the AI/AN community.

¹² American Addiction Centers. (February, 2024). Alcohol Addiction Resources for Different Demographics and Populations. Retrieved from: <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/alcoholism-treatment/native-americans>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Indian Health Service. American Indians Into Psychology Program. Retrieved from: [American Indians into Psychology Program | Student Opportunities \(ihs.gov\)](https://www.ihs.gov/american-indians-into-psychology-program/)