

CMCS ALL STAFF



Cultural Sensitivity Training for CMS Staff

Federal Government to Government Relationship with Indian Tribes

- The Federal government recognizes Indian Tribes as sovereign nations and this government-to-government relationship distinguishes American Indians and Alaska Natives from all other U.S. ethnic groups
- U.S. Constitution: Basis of government-to-government relationship
 - Indian Commerce Clause
 - Treaty Clause
 - Supremacy Clause
- Federal government responsibility is upheld by:
 - Court decisions – Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia (1831)
 - Federal Laws and Regulations
 - Presidential Executive Orders
 - Agency Tribal Consultation Policies

Role of CMS and Indian Health Programs

- In 1976, Congress enacted Title IV of the IHCA amending the Social Security Act to provide authority to IHS hospitals and clinics to receive reimbursement for services rendered to Medicare and Medicaid patients. The authority to bill Medicare and Medicaid is unique to any other federal health program (e.g., VA and DoD do not have similar authority).
- Congress recognized that many AI/ANs were eligible for Medicare and Medicaid services but had no access to services and providers, unless they traveled off reservation to private/public providers hundreds of miles away.
- Based on the Federal government's responsibility to provide healthcare to AI/ANs, Congress extended 100% Federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid services "received through an IHS/Tribal facility"
- IHS develops Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates through cost reports approved by CMS and OMB and are published in the Federal Register annually. These rates are referred to as IHS All-Inclusive rates (AIR).

The Role of CMS in Indian Health Care

CMS developed a video that highlights the history of Indian Health Care, CMS Tribal Consultation and the significant impact that CMS programs have in Indian Country. Find it at go.cms.gov/AIAN



American Indian and Alaska Native Phrases

- There are many phrases embedded in our language used either at work or in everyday conversations that are culturally insensitive to American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Many people use these phrases without intending to offend and might not be aware that the terms are culturally insensitive.
- The following slides contain some of these phrases for awareness.

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (1 of 8)

“Hey, Chief” - Unless the person you are addressing is actually a chief of a Tribe or nation, and you are aware of that fact, calling an American Indian “Chief” can be insulting. Equally offensive is the phrase, **“too many Chiefs, not enough Indians,”** which seems to imply that there is a lack of direction or leadership or too many people appearing to be in charge.

Alternatives to “Hey, Chief”:

- “Excuse/pardon me”
- “Can I ask you a question?”
- “Hello/hi”
- “Hey, friend”

Alternatives to “Too many Chiefs, not enough Indians”:

- “Too many cooks in the kitchen”
- “We’re lacking direction/leadership here”

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (2 of 8)

“How Indian are you?” - Just as you wouldn't ask another person about their ancestry, it's insensitive to ask how Indian someone is. This is something you don't ask people in general, but for some reason, people feel they have the license to ask Indians.

Alternative:

- There isn't one – this is not an appropriate question. Do not ask this.

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (3 of 8)

“Squaw” - the word is believed to have come from the Algonquian Indian term for “woman,” but it took on a derogatory meanings as early as the 19th century as an extremely offensive slur towards American Indian women.

- Secretary of Interior, Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna) declared the word offensive and ordered removal of the name from 650 federal land sites in 2021.

Alternative:

- There isn't one – this word is highly offensive. Do not use this word. Ever.

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (4 of 8)

“Pow-wow” - A pow-wow is a social gathering for ceremonial purposes, and many Tribes still hold them on a regular basis. Using this out of context to refer to a meeting or a quick get-together trivializes this tradition. It is very disrespectful.

Alternatives:

- “Gathering”
- “Meeting”
- “Huddle”
- “Chat”
- “Conversation”



Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (5 of 8)

“Off the reservation” - Implies you are not thinking or functioning properly.

- For example, “Hey, Bob, you’re going off the reservation on this deal.”
- The term refers to when Tribal members were forcibly removed to reservations and then left the reservation only for food or hunting.
- It trivializes the traumatic experience of Indian Removal.

Alternative:

- “Gone off Script”
- “Off the rails”
- “Running amok”
- “Missing the mark”
- “Crossing a line”
- “Treading into dangerous territory”

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (6 of 8)

“Circle the wagons” - Circle the wagons translates to “the savages are coming and we are about to be attacked.”

- Hollywood movies about North American settlers moving west to invade Tribal lands popularized this phrase.
- This phrase is also used in business to mean that something took a long time to organize, such as, “sorry it took us so long to circle the wagons on this issue”

Alternative:

- “Present a united front”
- “Band together”
- “Let’s come together as a group and work through these issues”
- Or, alternatively, “sorry it took us so long to get organized on this issue”

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (7 of 8)

“Hold down the fort” and “on the warpath” - These are very common phrases in the business world. However, “hold down the fort” stems from the settlers and soldiers building forts to resist the stereotypical North American “savage” when they were “on the warpath.”

Alternatives to “hold down the fort”:

- “Keep the trains moving”
- “Keep an eye on things while we’re gone”
- “Keep things running smoothly while we’re away”

Alternatives to “on the warpath”:

- “Really angry/mad/frustrated”
- “Ready to fight/argue”
- “Energized/spirited”

Culturally Inappropriate Phrases and Alternatives (8 of 8)

“Low man on the totem pole” or “climbing the totem pole” -

Totem poles are very sacred items to the people who carve and display them. Figures carved on totem poles represent familiar legends, clan lineages or notable events.

- In some First Nation communities, being low on the totem pole is actually a higher honor than being on the top.

Alternative:

- “Lowest ranking position”
- “Inexperienced”
- “Left behind”

CMS Division of Tribal Affairs

For additional information:

DTA Website: go.cms.gov/AIAN

Questions: tribalaffairs@cms.hhs.gov

