

# National American Indian & Alaska Native Childhood Trauma TSA, Category II

A PARTNER IN  
**NCTSN**

 The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

**IOWA**



## NCTSI – Category II Program Co-Director

**Teresa Brewington, MBA, MEdL**, works for the Native Center for Behavioral Health at The University of Iowa. She is the Co-Director for the National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health TTC – School Mental Health Program and the Co-Director for the National American Indian and Alaska Native Child Traumatic Stress Initiative – Category II. She is an enrolled member of the Coharie Tribe and a descendent of the Lumbee Tribe. She holds a Master's in Educational Leadership, a Master's in Business Administration and has 36 credit hours towards a Master's in Counseling. She has held positions as a director at several mental health agencies and worked as a school guidance counselor serving primarily Hispanic/Latino students. She has also served as a foster care agency supervisor, where she worked directly with the Salt River Pima Indian Community placing Native American children in foster homes. Her last position was as the Elementary School Principal for Native children at the Meskwaki Settlement, located in Iowa, where she currently resides with her husband and granddaughter. Teresa's personal vision is to influence and inspire others to shower Native children with all they need to become a success story-the person they are supposed to become.



## **NCTSI – Category II Program Coordinator**

**Liz Saathoff, MPH**, is the Program Coordinator for the National AI/AN Childhood Trauma TSA, Category II. She is a recent graduate of the Master of Public Health in Community and Behavioral Health program at the University of Iowa. She received her B.A. in Public Health with a Certificate in Writing from the University of Iowa.





## Trauma Team – GRA

**Eleanor Witt** is currently in her second year of pursuing a master's degree in the University of Iowa's school counseling program. She has a B.A. in Vocal Music Education with a minor in Spanish from Central College. As a graduate research assistant with the Native Center for Behavioral Health, Eleanor assists with grants and projects regarding the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative.



# Who We Are

- **Our Centers Goal:** Increase national infrastructure and the Native and non-Native workforce and AI/AN community members to effectively prevent, reduce, and treat trauma and increase wellness and resiliency among AI & AN children, adolescents, and their families. We will prioritize the identification and dissemination of programs and approaches that seize the opportunities presented in early childhood and adolescence as an optimal time for prevention and intervention to mitigate trauma and promote resilience. We work to implement a multi-faceted approach to provide education and training and technical assistance, products, webinars, podcasts, asynchronous training, and micro-learning modules, TA listening sessions, peer-to-peer learning communities, storytelling strategies, tele-mental health programs, Workforce Institutes, Youth Leadership Academies, and more.
- We serve those who work with Native youth including those within
  - School systems (teachers, principals, staff, counselors, janitors, administrators, etc.)
  - Health and mental health centers (nurses, doctors, administrators, counselors etc.)
  - Tribal Governments
  - Juvenile justice systems (lawyers, social workers, judges, clerks, jurors, etc.)
  - Child welfare (social workers, foster parents, etc.)
  - **Anyone serving AI/AN youth**



# Types of Trauma related to AI/AN

- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Community / Lateral Violence
- Witnessing / surviving a traumatic event
- Bullying
- Neglect
- Complex Trauma
- Natural Disasters
- Pandemics / COVID
- National/local events / Wars
- Medical Illness / Abuse / Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Mental Abuse
- Sexual Violence / Rape
- Sexual Neglect / Abuse
- Sex/Human Trafficking
- Violence
- Traumatic Grief
- Partner / Family / Domestic Violence
- Early Childhood Trauma
- Racism / Discrimination
- Generational / Historical Trauma
- Grief / loss for a loved one
- Victim / Witness of a crime

**Trauma** is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives. American Psychological Association. <sup>1</sup>





# Trauma amongst AI/AN children

- Taking **historical trauma** into account, it is to be expected that current AI/AN populations are reconciling the grief inherited from generations before them.<sup>2</sup>

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years)

- High rates of all ACE indicators:
- High rates of Trauma Indicators: physical, sexual and emotional abuse, intimate partner violence, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation/divorce, incarcerated household member(s), poverty, unemployment, chronic stress, child maltreatment, child abuse/neglect, victims of sexual abuse/assault, mental illness, suicide, violence or exposure



# What happens if Trauma is NOT addressed

- Changes in behaviors
  - Memories and nightmares
  - Strained interpersonal relationships
  - Stress, angry, fearful, impulsive
  - Nervousness, anxiety, moody
  - Grief stricken
  - Physical symptoms
- **Acute Trauma** – single incident
  - **Chronic Trauma** – repeated, prolonged ex. domestic violence
  - **Complex Trauma** – varied and multiple traumatic exposure

Trauma in children can interfere with brain development and change the emotional, behavioral and cognitive functioning <sup>3</sup>

Approximately 1 in 4 U.S. children will experience a significant traumatic event by the age of 16. Research suggests that Native American youth are at increased risk of trauma, depression, and PTSD as a result of grief and exposure to traumatic events.<sup>4</sup>







# Mission Statement

The National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health TTC K-12 School Initiative is committed to provide **culturally informed**, evidence based and experienced based programs and services to support Native students spiritual and emotional wellbeing. We provide a forward-thinking approach that give respect to **their identity, culture and sovereignty**.





# Who we serve:

- Our Goal is to serve ALL Native students by working with the entire school community
- We serve:
  - Students
  - Parents
  - School Counselors
  - School Teachers
  - School Principals
  - School Educational Directors
  - Tribal Leaders
  - Community Professionals working with AI/AN







# What we do:

- Support
- Educate
- Train
- Collaborate
- Provide Resources
- Telehealth in Schools
- Technical Assistance
- Talking Circles
- Invitation Only Trainings
- Research
- Program Development





# Examples of Technical Assistance Requests

- School-Based Health Centers
- Suicide, COVID Crisis/Mitigation Plans
- Safety Plans/Precautions – Spacing, outside education, small classrooms etc.
- How to teach students with IEP/504
- Grief and Trauma
- Parenting During COVID
- Kids during COVID
- How to talk to students about COVID
- Online teaching tools
- Platforms –telehealth, alternatives to internet access
- Communicating with parents
- Offering telehealth
- Story Telling
- Talking Circles
- Teaching and Counseling tools specific to Natives
- Schools and Mental Health
- Working in Native Communities







# Initiatives, Projects, and Trainings



National American Indian and Alaska Native

**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

School Mental Health Program

**IOWA**

**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

# Sacred Seeds



**Sacred Seeds**  
growing resilient advocacy

# Sacred Seeds

Sacred Seeds is, in collaboration with the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), where participants discuss different topics including advocacy and parent voice, special education and evaluation referrals, IDEA and FAPE, IEP documents, LRE, procedural safeguards and funding, behavior and discipline, planning for transition periods and between schools, Section 504 and ADA, and COVID-19's impact on special education. This class is for parents, guardians, aunts/uncles, grandparents, foster parents, community members, and all advocates of AI/AN youth. 11 2 – hour classes and participants will receive a certification as a Sacred Seeds IEP Advocate.



**Sacred Seeds**  
growing resilient advocacy

# Sacred Seeds – An IEP Advocacy Program for Parents of AI/AN Students

- The National American Indian and Alaska Native MHTTC K-12 School Mental Health Program partnered with COPAA, Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, to develop a program titled **Sacred Seeds**. Sacred Seeds was developed specifically as an IEP advocacy training for AI/AN students to further the movement that **EVERY CHILD DOES MATTER**. Upon the completion of the course, participants received a Sacred Seeds IEP Training Certificate.
  - July 19: Opening – Parent Voice
  - July 26: Referral to Special Education & Evaluations
  - August 2: IDEA & FAPE
  - August 9: The IEP Document
  - August 16: LRE
  - August 23: Procedural Safeguards & Funding
  - August 30: Behavior & Discipline
  - September 6: Transition
  - September 13: Section 504 & ADA
  - September 20: COVID & Special Education
  - September 27: Q&A and Resources



**Sacred Seeds**  
growing resilient advocacy



# Stronger Together: A Native Youth Round Table



# Stronger Together: A Native Youth Round Table

- An ongoing panel discussion with Native youth aged 17-24 years old who are thriving in their communities, and personal and professional lives. Despite the many traumas that have impacted Native lives, they search for a brighter, better, and healing future.
- Through their personal stories, their triumphs, and their pitfalls, this group of Native youth will teach confidence and resiliency to inspire other Native youth that they too can be whom they are meant to be.

**Goal: To listen, learn, and heal with our future leaders and help Native children learn from atrocities to Native peoples and guide them through overcoming the past and looking ahead to a better, brighter, fulfilled future.**



# Native Youth Round Table Sessions

Celebrating Native  
American Heritage  
Month

Adverse Childhood  
Experiences and  
Paths to Resiliency

Lateral Violence:  
Hurt People Hurt  
People

**Coming November 10:  
Native Youth in  
Higher Education**





# Suicide Prevention





# School Based Peer to Peer Suicide Prevention Program



- We are developing a school based, peer-to-peer mental health and suicide crisis program culturally specific for Native populations.
- This program will:
  - Promote Mental Health in Schools and reduce stigma associated with mental and suicidal thoughts.
    - Talking and educating those about MH and suicide helps to reduce stigma.
    - Students are more likely to talk and share feelings to trusted friends over adults, caregivers, professionals
    - Training peers to become Gatekeepers – intentional outreach with fellow students
- How it works:
  - Evidence Based
  - Native youth Question, Persuade, Refer. Gatekeeper trainers: recognize warning signs/risk factors, act when needed
  - Trained Licensed QPR teachers, administrators and other staff
  - Support and empower Native peers to be leaders and gatekeeper's
  - Curriculum topics: suicide prevention skills, mental health, grief, how to help a friend, self-care, bullying, and other relevant topics
  - Curriculum for elementary/junior/high school with continued networking, training and support
  - Parent manuals/support/ways to get involved
  - Partnerships with mental health and community organizations

# Train the Trainer/Healing Workshops

- Teaching professionals how to write & talk about suicide with youth
- Centering activities & focused discussions for individuals



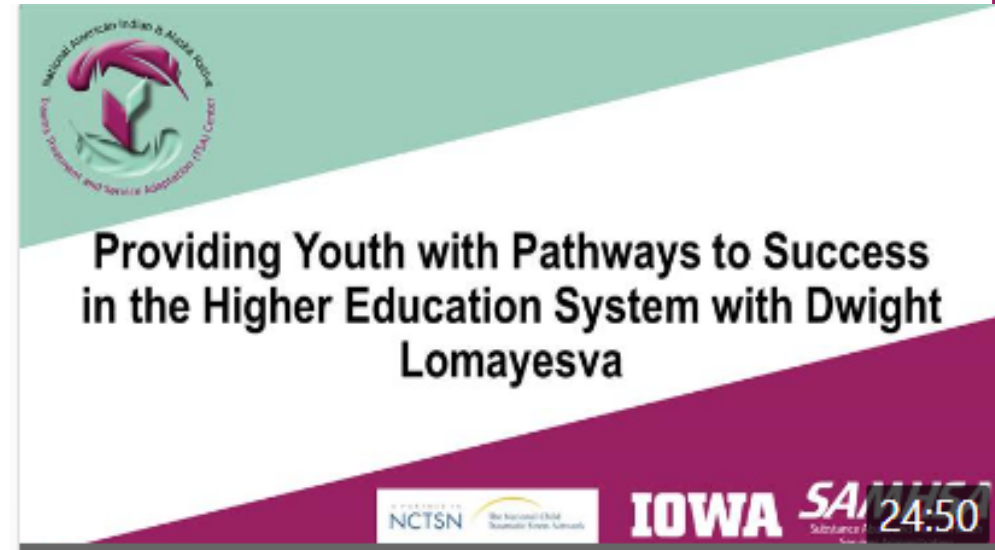
# Human Trafficking Modules

## Human Trafficking in Indigenous Communities: Module 1



# Podcasts

The National AI/AN Childhood Trauma TSA, Category II Center would like to offer you the opportunity to learn with us through brief, 10–30-minute podcasts. Listen to the podcasts below to hear personal stories, gain new insight into an array of topics, and dig deeper into understanding matters and trauma-informed care and practices as it relates to AI and AN people.





# Examples of Developed Products

<https://www.nativecenter-ttsa.org/>

## Reflect Repair Prepare

**Trauma and Healing in AI/AN Communities**

"Healing doesn't mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives." - Unknown

The National American Indian and Alaska Native Childhood Trauma Center TSA, Category II invites you to use this time to **REFLECT** on your past, **REPAIR** the present, and **PREPARE** for your future.

**What is Trauma?**

Trauma is an emotional response to an event that can cause both immediate and long-term reactions. Trauma can occur in response to any frightening, dangerous, or violent event that poses a threat to your life or bodily integrity, or from witnessing a traumatic event.<sup>1</sup>

**Trauma Types Experienced by American Indians/Alaska Natives**

- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Community/Lateral Violence
- Witnessing/surviving a traumatic event
- Bullying
- Neglect
- Complex Trauma
- Natural Disasters
- Pandemics/COVID
- National/local events/Wars
- Medical Illness/Abuse/Neglect
- Physical Abuse/Mental Abuse
- Historical Trauma/Generational Trauma
- Sexual Violence/Rape
- Sexual Neglect/Abuse
- Sex/Human Trafficking
- Violence

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**


PTSD is a disorder that can develop in some individuals who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous traumatic event.<sup>2</sup> Research shows that American Indians suffer from post-traumatic stress at much higher rates (27%) than the greater population. This rate may be higher for AI/AN children due to the several forms of violence they may experience.<sup>4</sup>

**Symptoms associated with PTSD include:<sup>2</sup>**

- Re-experiencing symptoms, such as flashbacks, bad dreams, and frightening thoughts.
- Avoidance symptoms, such as staying away from places, people, events, or objects that remind one of the traumatic experience and avoiding thoughts or feelings associated with the traumatic experience.
- Arousal and reactivity symptoms, such as being easily startled, feeling tense, experiencing difficulties sleeping, or anger outbursts.
- Cognition and mood symptoms, such as difficulties remembering important aspects of the traumatic event, negative thoughts of self or world, feelings of guilt or blame, and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.

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**Photos:** Shutterstock






## Positive Talks: How Caregivers Can Talk With their AI/AN Child About Current Events and the Impacts They Can Have on Them

**Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**IOWA College of Public Health**

**SAMHSA** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

**NCTSN** The National Child Traumatic Stress Network



## Bullying & Native Youth

**National American Indian & Alaska Native School Mental Health Program**


**National American Indian and Alaska Native MHTTC** Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration


**BULLYING AND YOUTH DATA**

- Thousands of students refuse to go to school and dread the physical and verbal aggression of their peers, as well as the isolation that comes from being bullied (CDC, 2010).
- A recent report from the American Medical Association (AMA) on a study of more than 15,000 6-10th graders estimates that approximately 3.7 million youths engage in, and more than 3.2 million are victims of, moderate or serious bullying each year.
- Bullying negatively affects the atmosphere of the school and disrupts the learning environment: student achievement suffers, teacher morale declines, adult-student relationships suffer, parent confidence and trust in the school erodes (Stopbullying.gov, 2012).
- The effects of being bullied include "higher levels of insecurity, anxiety, depression, loneliness, unhappiness, physical and mental symptoms, and low self-esteem" (Nansel et al., 2001).
- It could also extend to incarceration, depression-suicide, and problems in school functioning (Pergolizzi, et al., 2009).

**BULLYING AND NATIVE YOUTH**

- "54% of all American Indian students reported some type of bullying behavior (either physical violence or threats).
- Of those experiencing bullying behavior, 29.3% experienced threatening, 47.5% experienced physical violence and 23.5% experienced both physical violence and threatening behavior (Campbell & Smalling 2013).
- Bullying can be even more of a challenge for Native Americans due to the suffering and violence Native Americans have endured.
- Living on a reservation is one of the risk factors associated with bullying, placing Native youth at a higher risk of experiencing it.
- Youth on reservations face stereotypes and misconceptions of what it means to be a Native American from the main society and inherent historical bullying by the major culture, generational poverty, generational alcoholism and drug addiction, poor nutrition and diet, substandard and inadequate housing, and or family structures that are not intact (Owen, 2011).
- Research shows that bullying has emerged as a contributing factor to the sharp rise in the American Indian and Alaskan Native youth suicide rate (National Education Association, 2011).





## Trauma and Suicide Among AI/AN Youth


**Culture is prevention**

Native culture is vibrant and enduring, and AI/AN youth can draw strength and courage from an uplifting community around them. Traditional cultural practices have sustained AI/AN peoples for centuries, and preserving and promoting culture is shown to reduce health disparities in Native communities.<sup>1</sup> Strong culture leads to resilience, which is defined as the ability to mitigate the effects of stress and trauma to maintain healthy development.<sup>2</sup>

**ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences**

- AI/AN children ages 0-17 encounter adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) at a much higher rate and with greater intensity than non-Hispanic White children.<sup>1</sup>
- 50% of AI/AN youth have been exposed to a severe traumatic event.<sup>1</sup>
- Studies show between 78%-98% of AI/AN youth have experienced at least one traumatic event of any severity.<sup>1,3</sup>
- Each additional ACE increased the risk of suicide by 37% in AI/AN youth.<sup>1</sup>
- Physical abuse was found to lead to the highest increase in lifetime suicide attempts, as opposed

*"Hold on to what is good, even if it's a handful of earth. Hold on to what you believe, even if it's a tree that stands by itself. Hold on to what you must do, even if it's a long way from here. Hold on to your life, even if it's easier to let go. Hold on to my hand, even if someday I'll be gone away from you."*  
- Crawford, Blackfoot warrior and orator<sup>4</sup>





## PROTECTING OUR NATIVE YOUTH

**April 2022: Child Abuse Prevention Month**

**"Let us put our minds together and see what kind of life we can make for our children."**  
- Chief Sitting Bull, Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux<sup>1</sup>

American Indian and Alaska Native children and adolescents are descended from and immersed in a culture that is vibrant, resilient, and enduring. When Native youth face hardships, they can draw strength from the courage of their Elders and ancestors to move forward and heal. One of the first steps to healing is getting our Native children out of traumatic situations. This guide gives resources to help Native youth and their families through the process of healing from child abuse.

Child abuse is defined as, "when a parent or caregiver acts in a way that causes a child to be hurt physically or harmed emotionally, or fails to act to prevent such harm."<sup>2</sup> Childhood maltreatment rates are higher among AI/AN populations than any other racial group in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Childhood abuse, including physical violence and neglect, in AI/AN youth is linked to personal and psychological difficulties such as low self-esteem, depression, PTSD, suicide attempts, substance use, poor social relationships, and intimate partner abuse.<sup>4</sup>

**WHAT DO I DO?**<sup>2</sup>

Whether abuse occurred in the past or present, its effects can become even more harmful if ignored. Recovering is a journey, and support from trusted friends, family, Elders, and others in Native communities can help AI/AN youth on the road to a healthy future. Knowing the signs of an unsafe environment may help our Native youth stay safe. Assess the situation and follow your instincts. If an environment feels unsafe, it probably is.

1. Call authorities immediately. 911 or local police
2. Talk to someone. A trusted adult or a resource below
3. Seek support. Support groups in your community/school or traditional healing practices

**Signs of Child Abuse<sup>5</sup>**


- Sudden changes in behavior
- Always watchful, preparing

**Why Does Abuse Happen?**  
There is no easy answer to why child abuse and neglect occur.

**24/7 RESOURCES FOR YOUTH**


Childhelp: National Child Abuse Hotline  
Call or Text: 1-800-4-A-Child (422-4455)



## A Teacher's Guide to CELEBRATING NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

**Celebrating Our Culture through Our People, Food, Language, and Traditions**



# How to Submit a TA Request

- Go to <https://www.nativecenter-ttsa.org/>
- Click 'Technical Assistance'
  - Read the explanation about Technical Assistance
  - Fill out the 'Make a TA Request' Form at the bottom of the page.



## Make a TA Request

Please fill out the form below to request technical assistance. We will review and let you know if and how we can help, or provide a referral to an organization that can help.

First Name \*

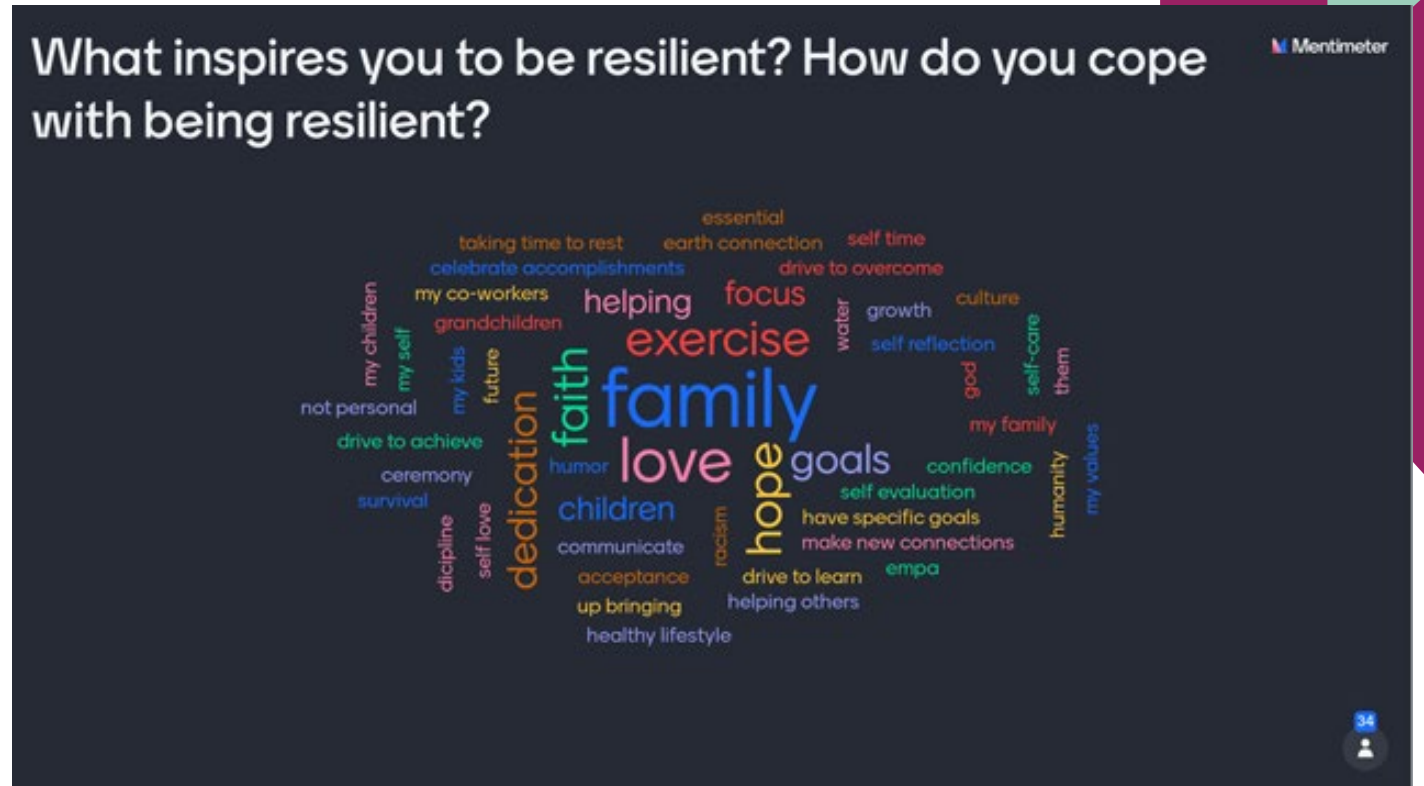
Last Name \*

Email \*

Write a message

# Examples of completed TA Requests

- Crab Mentality
- Iowa Commission of Native American Affairs
- Trauma Informed Care Training and Development
- Trauma informed Workplace
- Powerless Becoming Powerful: Internalized Colonialism and Lateral Violence
- Parent to Parent





## Other Offerings

Human Trafficking Online Certified Training Program

Podcast – LGBTQ/Two Spirit, STDs, life transitions, and more

Office Hours

Resource Hub

Web page with Resource Hub

Technical Assistance

Monthly Listening Sessions/Trainings/Talking Circles

Needs Assessment

Upcoming workshop – MMIP training

Products – resource guide, pocket guides, lit reviews, fact sheets, articles



*Funded by Substance Abuse and  
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Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

# Questions or Comments?

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