



Cardiovascular Disease Program Visioning and Strategic Planning Partnership

As part of its Promoting Health Equity project, the Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) guided two Urban Indian Health Organizations (UIHOs) through a visioning and planning partnership to strengthen their efforts to address cardiovascular disease (CVD). This Spotlight outlines the process and outcomes of this partnership between Denver Indian Health & Family Services (DIHFS) & Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition (NUIHC).

Both UIHOs summarized their current CVD programming status, discussed potential areas of growth and learned the roles and responsibilities of each participating organization in a preliminary teleconference. Following this introduction, the UIHI led each site through an organizational readiness assessment for CVD programming change. The organizational readiness assessment was developed by the UIHI after review of several publicly available health programming readiness and change assessments that were chosen for their relevancy to urban AI/AN health care.

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The UIHI, through dialog with the UIHOs, elicited agreement about levels of readiness in five domains that help determine current capacity. Those domains are Leadership, Community Profile, Existing Infrastructure, Financial Resources, and Work Environment. These domains help identify important pillars of organizational structure and environment that can enable or inhibit successful change implementation. The [UIHI Organizational Readiness Assessment](#) is available on the Promoting Health Equity project website.

The partnership culminated in a day long Strategic Planning Workshop at the UIHI in Seattle Washington, where representatives from NUIHC and DIHFS came together to exchange ideas, share resources and plan for the strengthening of their CVD services. The workshop provided an opportunity for both organizations to develop goals, objectives, and strategies in an open dialog designed to inform their planning and implementation of specific action steps that will help them achieve CVD programming goals. Workshop participants toured the Seattle Indian Health Board’s (SIHB) Leschi Clinic and Healthy Heart Program. SIHB Executive Director Ralph Forquera also sat down with the workshop participants to share his experiences and insight into establishing strategic partnerships with public and private entities to protect and expand funding sources. The participating UIHOs garnered valuable contacts as well as insight into the differing perspectives and approaches to program planning. Specific issues addressed during the workshop included implementing CVD risk assessment in an already busy primary care visit, ways to improve third party billing capacity to ensure reimbursement for CVD services, and strengthening of community partnerships. By the end of the workshop, participants had created task lists that would help them enact their strategies, reach their goals, and attain their vision for CVD services.

In follow-up conversations, DIHFS informed the UIHI that through their participation in the partnership, they were better able to frame their goals to approach community partners to bring CVD health awareness to their community. DIHFS has since implemented a pilot program with the University of Colorado to help their clients lose 5% of their body weight and manage nutrition, portion control, physical activity, and behavior modification.

Please visit the [UIHI's Promoting Health Equity for Urban American Indians and Alaska Natives project webpage](#) for information and tools to support partnerships, resources for CVD and assessments for community and organizational change.

