



### OUTCOME:

Foster new partnerships and strengthen existing connections between agencies to support the health and wellness of American Indian and Alaska Native women.

### KEYS TO SUCCESS:

- Be mindful of each agency's internal process.
- Recruit diverse membership from many agencies.
- Seek out endorsements from local officials or prominent figures in the community.
- Coalitions are most successful when all participants work together; each participating agency should contribute by offering ideas, providing meeting space, supplying resources for materials, and/or through financial support.

## WOMEN'S WELLNESS COALITION

*Building a women's wellness coalition is a great way to combine resources and strengths from various organizations that have a strong interest in the health and wellness of American Indian and Alaska Native women. Coalitions are an efficient and effective way to bring attention to issues affecting AI/AN women, develop broad support, and build capacity to secure resources. Additionally, the formation of a women's wellness coalition is a great way to create partnerships and foster networking opportunities.*

### INGREDIENTS:

- People who are eager and passionate about women's wellness.
- A space for meeting.
- Individuals willing to take on leadership roles.
- Staff from diverse agencies.

### PREPARATION:

**Step 1:** Research coalition building. There are many books/articles that describe the steps to developing a coalition. Do an online search or check out your local neighborhood library for resources.

**Step 2:** Check for existing coalitions in your community that your agency might be able to join. Your agency could suggest incorporating breast and cervical wellness work into an existing Native coalition, or join a broad women's health coalition to highlight the importance of reaching urban AI/AN women.

**Step 3:** If you want to form your own coalition rather than joining an existing one, start looking for coalition members. Become familiar with agencies, organizations, and individuals in your community who are concerned with AI/AN women's wellness. You may want to include your state BCCEDP or local BCCEDP contractors in your coalition. Identify and recruit possible members while considering the resources and strengths each member could bring to the coalition.



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE MONTANA AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN'S HEALTH COALITION (MAIWHC) AND THE MONTANA CANCER SCREENING PROGRAM FOR SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT THEIR WORK.

MAIWHC's COALITION QUILT IS SHARED BETWEEN PARTICIPATING AGENCIES.



Step 4: As a group, agree on who will lead coalition meetings and then develop a shared agenda, being mindful of the interests of individual agencies and the broader goal of the coalition.

Step 5: Establish a shared understanding of how the coalition will operate, including who will keep notes, how coalition members will be contacted, where meetings will be held, and other details.

Step 6: Create a mission statement that communicates the message of the coalition and keep for records. Set goals for the coalition, develop a plan to achieve your goals, and move forward. The mission and goals of the coalition can then be shared to help obtain funding and small grants to support the work of the coalition and to share information with your community.

### SHARING THE RESULTS:

Keep track of coalition goals and successes and review as a group on a regular basis. If it is taking a long time to accomplish a goal, break it down into smaller, more achievable steps.

Make the community aware of your coalition. Celebrate the achievements of your work through meetings, events, or parties. Advertise the coalition's achievements in a newsletter, on your agency's website, or in local newspaper.

### TIPS:

- Always be on the lookout for new members who can provide new and unique perspectives to benefit the coalition.
- Try scheduling coalition meetings near another meeting that everyone will be attending.
- Recognize each agency's membership in the coalition when you create posters, certificates, or other materials.

### COALITION HIGHLIGHT:

The Montana American Indian Women's Health Coalition (MAIWHC) was established in 2002 by the Montana Cancer Screening Program (MCSP). MAIWHC members include women residing on reservations and in urban areas, who act as local grassroots advocates, promoting breast and cervical health education, helping with screening activities in their communities and assisting with outreach and recruitment. Coalition members are volunteers, and come together as a group twice yearly to discuss the Coalition's work plan and share information on their experiences, successes and challenges. MAIWHC builds on the successful strategy of Native women encouraging other Native women to be proactive about their health and wellness, and has been a valuable and instrumental component of the Montana Cancer Screening Program in reaching AI/AN women throughout the state. MAIWHC has also been a successful unifying partnership between the MCSP, UIHO and tribes.