NAVAJO EPIDEMIOLOGY CENTER
A REGIONAL GOOD HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN INDIAN COUNTRY UPDATE

GHWIC Background
Between 2014-2019, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will invest over $78 million in chronic disease prevention efforts through the Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (GHWIC) initiative. With the support of GHWIC funding, eleven Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs):

- Coordinate evaluation activities and data collection to highlight the regional work of GHWIC-funded Tribes and Tribal organizations.
- Provide technical assistance to GHWIC-funded Tribes and Tribal organizations.
- Enhance cross-sector partnerships and strengthen American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) networks across the service region.

Regional Efforts to Prevent and Manage Chronic Disease
The Navajo Epidemiology Center (NEC) implements the GHWIC evaluation for the Indian Health Service (IHS) Navajo Area. In the past year, the NEC has coordinated with five Navajo Chapters (i.e., local governments) to support chronic disease prevention and management by:

1. Supplementing the Navajo Nation Health Survey
NEC supplemented a baseline comprehensive Navajo Nation Health Survey (NNHS), similar in scope to the CDC BRFSS. - a substantial accomplishment given the Navajo Nation land base of 27,000 square miles across three states - Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The results of the NNHS have provided valuable insight into health behavior risk factors and priority areas for future wellness programming.

2. Providing Technical Assistance
In 2014, Navajo Nation became the first tribe to pass legislation implementing the Healthy Diné Nation Act, which imposes a 2% tax on junk food and beverages at participating retail businesses operating within the Navajo Nation. Revenue from the tax is distributed to all 110 Navajo Chapters within the Navajo Nation to invest towards community wellness plans. With funding from GHWIC, the NEC provides technical assistance and support to five pilot Navajo Chapters to increase physical activity and access to nutritional foods, while instilling cultural values.

3. Fostering Collaborative Partnerships to Improve Health Outcomes
The NEC continues partnerships and collaborations with local, regional, and national organizations to increase awareness and to implement policies that empower tribal members to lead healthy and productive lives. This includes efforts to develop vegetable gardens, access to clean water, and opportunities for increased physical activity.

Activity Spotlight: Commercial Tobacco Prevention and Control
NEC reached out to six Navajo Chapters to assess their interest in developing no-smoking policies at their respective facilities. Additionally, outreach to Navajo youth was conducted in Summer 2017 to learn more about belief systems and behaviors related to commercial tobacco. NEC staff also provided an overview of the health effects of commercial tobacco. NEC invited participants to draft education slogans based on what they had learned. Some of the slogans will be posted on billboards as part of an NEC anti-smoking campaign.

September 2017
The Commercial Tobacco Prevention Program provided training for Navajo youth on the harmful health effects of commercial tobacco and plans to develop 2-3 additional trainings in Years 4 and 5 of the GHWIC initiative. The program will also collaborate with the Navajo Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention program to identify additional partners in the States of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah who may provide input on development of training curricula for commercial tobacco use prevention. The program plans to initiate a Tips Campaigns with input and participation from Navajo participants who wish to share stories on how to reduce commercial tobacco usage and promote overall health and well-being.

NEC will use the Guide to Building Healthy Navajo Communities Toolkit for training and technical support to five Navajo Chapters on increasing and enhancing physical activity opportunities in their community members. In collaboration with Northern Arizona University, NEC will provide technical assistance to the Navajo Chapters to develop measurable outcomes and to highlight the significance of the tribe’s Healthy Diné Nation Act aimed at increasing the consumption of healthy foods and beverages in the community.

To increase access to nutritious and healthy foods and beverages, NEC is working with two of the five Navajo Chapters piloting the Toolkit to enhance their respective community wellness plans. The plans will allow participating Chapters to increase access to traditional foods and healthier community food options. The Toolkit is a culturally focused model based on the Navajo philosophy of holistic health that incorporates the significance of individual, family, and community wellness as well as four domains of self-care. This Toolkit highlights the use of GHWIC funds to create and promote sustainable, community-based programs rooted in culturally significant values and teachings. This work provides a foundation for programs to promote the overall health in all 110 Navajo Chapters.