

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO ADDRESS SUBSTANCE USE IN RURAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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Background

Community engagement is a core component in the development of models of care, intervention, and educational programming with respect to addressing substance use. This is achieved by integrating meaningful participation of the community and honoring lived experiences, values, cultures, and place-based knowledge.

Community Engaged Approach

Community engagement in research and programming is a dynamic and collaborative process that includes:

- Relationships building and mutual trust
- Giving voice to the community
- Shared decision making
- Place-based approaches

Description of Interventions

- **Community Forums** with community members, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, social services, and individuals in recovery to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and give hope.
- **Focus Groups** with individuals at various stages of recovery from a substance use disorder.
- **Surveys** with individuals injecting drugs and individuals in recovery in partnership with harm reduction and recovery organizations.
- **Supporting Local Networks and Coalitions**
- **Changemaker Retreats** provided leadership training to support the development and implementation of innovative programs to support recovery.

Effectiveness

- **Trauma and healing education and training** with Tribal communities and those who support them.
- **Virtual harm reduction toolkit** accessible to practitioners and community members to help increase knowledge and reduce stigma.
- **Harm reduction vending** machines in Tribal communities.
- **Community Naloxone trainings** (384 trainings between 2020-2023.)
- **Fentanyl Testing Kits** that included educational resources and testing strips that were distributed to partner such as local law enforcement, treatment centers, county public health departments, and food shelves (29,920 fentanyl testing strip kits distributed between 2020-2023)



Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge our communities in Minnesota who are dedicated to co-creating innovative education programs and trainings to address substance use in rural and Tribal communities.

Next Steps

Community engagement is at the core of our work. It is ongoing and dynamic. It is the bridge between need and solutions to help provide innovative place-based education and training to support strong recovery communities.