Special Diabetes Program for Indians:

Type 2 Diabetes and Youth: Acting Now for Future Generations

Since its inception, the *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* has addressed the threat of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes, acting on the best available evidence to respond to this public health crisis. Now, over 80% of the *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* grant programs use recommended public health strategies to provide diabetes prevention activities and services for American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth.

Why is it important to prevent type 2 diabetes in youth?

Within a decade, the rate of type 2 diabetes in children is expected to exceed the rate of type 1 diabetes for all ethnic and racial groups. For children born in the United States in 2000, **the lifetime risk of being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at some point in their lives is 30% for boys and 40% for girls**, if obesity rates stabilize. The lifetime risk of developing type 2 diabetes is even higher among some ethnic and minority groups—including American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Because youth with type 2 diabetes develop the disease at such an early age, they will experience more years of disease burden and a higher probability of developing serious type 2 diabetes-related complications. These complications will threaten life expectancy, reduce quality of life, and lower productivity during the prime years of their lives.

To address the problem of type 2 diabetes among American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth, the *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* has implemented the following activities:

The *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* recognized the problem of type 2 diabetes and youth early in its history, and has supported comprehensive interventions to prevent type 2 diabetes and obesity among children and youth.

Reducing the burden of obesity

Why is this important?

The increasing rates of childhood obesity and overweight are the major reason for the growing prevalence of type 2 diabetes in youth. Being overweight is one of the strongest risk factors for the development of type 2 diabetes.

Special Diabetes Program for Indians activities

- 67% of grant programs reported in 2005 that they **educated women about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding** for at least two months to prevent diabetes. Breastfeeding plays a major role in preventing obesity and type 2 diabetes.
- 94% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **offered nutrition services** for children and youth (65% increase since 1997).
- 72% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **offered weight management programs** for children and youth (64% increase since 1997).

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Increasing physical activity

Why is this important?

Physical activity is one of the most effective ways to prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Special Diabetes Program for Indians activities

- 69% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **offered physical activity programs** for school-age youth (60% increase since 1997).
- 59% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **offered school-based physical activity programs** (37% increase since 1997).
- 82% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **offered community-based physical activity programs** (69% increase since 1997).

Working with schools and the community

Why is this important?

Partnerships with local schools and community-based programs strengthen the public health infrastructure to address type 2 diabetes in American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth. Healthy food choices in schools and other community settings, safe environments for physical activity, and encouragement of physical activity in school and community settings are important factors that positively affect the health of children and youth.

Special Diabetes Program for Indians activities

- 73% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **worked with local school systems** (51% increase since 1997).
- 31% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **built or improved playgrounds** (27% increase since 1997).
- 35% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they had guidelines, policies, or campaigns to **limit television viewing** for children and youth (33% increase since 1997).
- 67% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **provided safe environments for physical activity** (52% increase since 1997).
- 59% of grant programs reported in 2006 that they **offered school-based nutrition services** (49% increase since 1997).

The *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* has brought hope to American Indian and Alaska Native communities that they can reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes in their children and youth. With ongoing support, the *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* can continue to address the serious threat of type 2 diabetes to future generations.

The *Special Diabetes Program for Indians* has helped to create a supportive environment for American Indian and Alaska Native children and youth to exercise and eat healthy, helping lower their risk for developing type 2 diabetes now and in the future.