

# INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

## PROTECTIVE FACTORS





# Protective Factors

Protective factors are elements in a person's life which make it easier to avoid hazard or risk. Protective factors can come from individuals, families, and communities. The following behavioral, social, familial, or environmental factors may help prevent or reduce the likelihood that an individual may misuse or become dependent on opioids:

- **Positive** connections to family, friends, or community strong coping and problem-solving skills
- **Cultural** or religious beliefs that value self-preservation
- **Availability** of and access to clinical services and medical treatment
- **Willingness** to get treatment

*Source: <https://www.ihs.gov/opioids/prevention/>*



## CULTURE IS PREVENTION

In a study of suicide attempts among AI/AN youth, the authors concluded that **increasing protective factors was more effective** at reducing the probability of a suicide attempt than was decreasing risk factors.

*Source: Borowsky, I. W., Resnick, M. D., Ireland, M., & Blum, R. W. (1999). Suicide attempts among American Indian and Alaska native youth: Risk and protective factors. Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 153(6), 573-580*



## TRADITIONS AND CONNECTIONS

### Current and/or Future Aspirations

Examples include serving on tribal youth council, learning a skilled trade, earning money, traveling or education.

### Personal Wellness

Examples include good physical health habits, exercise and appropriate healthcare.

### Positive Self-image

Examples include feeling confident about who you are, receiving positive feedback from family and friends.

### Self-efficacy

Example include feeling confident about your abilities.

### Non-familial Connectedness

Examples include having connections with friends, team mates or co-workers.

### Family Connectedness

Examples include positive and supportive relationships with family members.

### Positive Opportunities

Examples includes joining a team, working toward a career or earning a license or certificate.

### Positive Social Norms

Example include families promoting healthy living without the use of commercial tobacco.

### Cultural Connectedness

Examples include learning and participating in cultural clubs, activities or sports.

*Source: Henson M, Sabo S, Trujillo A, Teufel-Shone N. Identifying Protective Factors to Promote Health in American Indian and Alaska Native Adolescents: A Literature Review. J Prim Prev. 2017 Apr;38(1-2):5-26. doi: 10.1007/s10935-016-0455-2. PMID: 27826690; PMCID: PMC5313316.*

## A FEW TRADITIONS

- Cultural Dances
- Drumming/Singing
- Cultural Foods/Cooking
- Regalia
- Festivals
- Smudging
- Governing Principles
- Jewelry
- Beading
- Agriculture
- Cultural Games/Sports
- Hunting/Gathering
- Sweat Lodge
- Language/History

# IHS INJURY PREVENTION

## Our Mission

Raise the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest possible level by decreasing the incidence of severe injuries and death to the lowest possible level and increasing the ability of tribes to address their injury problems.

## About IHS Injury Prevention

We are the lead IHS program to address the injury disparities in AI/AN communities. Our widely-recognized program works with tribes and partners to reduce the disproportionate impact of injuries on Indian people.



Indian Health Service  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857

For more information about protective factors, visit our website at [www.ihs.gov/injuryprevention/](http://www.ihs.gov/injuryprevention/) or scan the QR code.

