

ISSUE

Injuries are the leading cause of death among American Indians and Alaska Natives ages 1 to 44.

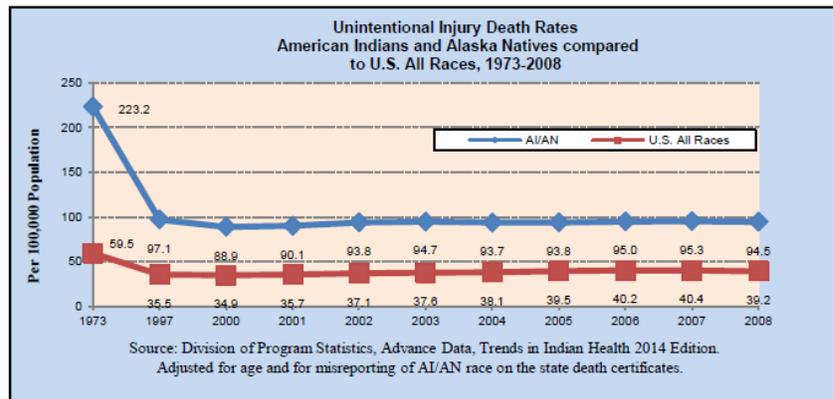
BACKGROUND

The Indian Health Service (IHS) Injury Prevention Program is based on the same public health principles that have been used to effectively control infectious diseases. Collaborative efforts in describing the factors amenable to change have led to implementation of successful community-specific solutions to the injury epidemic. Increasing the understanding that injuries are not “accidents” but predictable and preventable events is an integral part of the IHS Injury Prevention Program’s mission, which is to decrease the incidence of severe injuries and death to the lowest level possible and increase the ability of Tribes to prevent injuries within their communities.

STATUS

American Indians and Alaska Natives experience injury mortality rates that are 2.4 times greater than other Americans.

- Annually, injuries account for 43% of the years of productive life lost for American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- More than \$350 million is expended annually for the treatment of injuries.
- Implementation of effective injury prevention programs can improve the quality of life for Indian people and redirect the use of limited health care funds to treatment of other health conditions.
- Unintentional injury deaths to American Indian and Alaska Native people decreased 58% between 1973 and 2005.



Risk factors that contribute to the disproportionately higher injury rates among American Indians and Alaska Natives include a greater proportion of young adults as compared to other Americans, rural environments and lack of traffic safety legislation, and a greater number of alcohol-related incidents.

OPTIONS/PLANS

The IHS Injury Prevention Program promotes building the capacity of Tribes and communities by increasing understanding about the injury problem, sharing effective solutions, and assisting communities in implementing programs. Community-based injury prevention coalitions directed by tribal members and supported by tribal governments are becoming more visible throughout the IHS service areas. The IHS fosters competitive grant programs to build tribal capacity, to enhance existing public health infrastructure, and to implement effective community-based strategies to prevent injuries.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For referral to the appropriate spokesperson, contact the IHS Public Affairs Staff at 301-443-3593.