

# CULTURALLY COMPETENT DATA COLLECTION & CLIENT INTERACTION

## Guidance for Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS)



Accurate data collection for race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation is critical in HIV, HCV, and STI surveillance. For American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities, small population size means even a few cases can represent a significant impact. Misclassification or underreporting can erase these impacts entirely. Disease Intervention Specialists play a key role in ensuring AI/AN data are accurate, respectful, and meaningful so the numbers truly reflect the communities they represent.

### DO'S



- Recognize diversity: Any client you serve could identify as AI/AN, regardless of appearance, residence, or the tribal status of family members.
- Ask directly, respectfully: Always verbally inquire about race, Hispanic origin, and tribal affiliation.
- Have reference definitions ready: Keep clear definitions of race and ethnicity categories for easy explanation.
- Collect racial and tribal data yourself: Ensure information is accurate by collecting it firsthand rather than relying on other sources.
- Prepare for questions: Be ready to explain why this information is collected, e.g., for surveillance, reporting, or ensuring culturally appropriate services.
- Manage discomfort: Be aware that questions about race and tribal affiliation may be sensitive. Learn how to manage your own discomfort and respond professionally.
- Observe non-verbal cues: Pay attention to body language and tone to gauge comfort or confusion.
- Support multi-racial identification: Ensure forms and electronic systems allow for multiple races, ethnicities, and tribal affiliations.
- Include AI/AN options: Make sure all data collection tools allow clients to identify as “American Indian or Alaska Native”.
- Verify data with clients: Review forms or electronic entries with the client to ensure accuracy.
- Know tribal resources: Learn how to contact tribes or tribal health organizations for support, referrals, or other services.
- Engage in continuing education: Complete trainings that include cultural competency, client communication, and proper reporting procedures.
- Practice compassion: Approach all interactions with empathy, patience, and respect for client identity.



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## DONT'S X

- Don't assume someone's race or ethnicity based on appearance.
- Don't copy racial information from other professionals' notes, medical records, or transport documents.
- Do not make them prove they are AI/AN with a CDIB, or Tribal ID.
- Don't ignore the lessons and best practices from trainings you've completed.
- Don't respond with hostility, frustration, or other negative emotions, even if challenged.
- Don't skip reviewing your work for accuracy.



## Training for Racial Misclassification



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🌐 [www.racialmisclassification.org](http://www.racialmisclassification.org)



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Native Test | Controlling Epidemics by Designing Accessible Responses (CEDAR) | HIV & STI Initiatives

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