Trauma in Native American Youth

Kassandra Mason, LMFT
Southern Indian Health Council

August 26th, 2021
Kassandra Mason was born and raised here on the Kumeyaay land, also known as San Diego, CA. She is of Yaqui descendant through her father’s side. She is an Army Combat Veteran who participated in Operation Enduring Freedom. She received her Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from National University. Her specialties include trauma, depression, anxiety, and psychotic disorders. She is currently getting her certifications in both Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Expressive Arts Therapy. Kassandra’s philosophy is to meet her clients where they are currently at and work with them at their current level. She uses humor and genuineness to provide a safe and comfortable space for everyone. Outside of work, Kassandra enjoys music, podcasts, and is a self-identified nerd.
Disclosure Statement

- Faculty Disclosure Statement: As a jointly accredited provider of continuing education, the IHS Clinical Support Center must ensure balance, independence, objectivity, and scientific rigor in its educational activities. Course directors/coordinators, planning committee members, faculty, reviewers and all others who are in a position to control the content of this educational activity are required to disclose all relevant financial relationships with any commercial interest related to the subject matter of the educational activity. Safeguards against commercial bias have been put in place. Faculty will also disclose any off-label and/or investigational use of pharmaceuticals or instruments discussed in their presentation. All those who are in a position to control the content of this educational activity have completed the disclosure process and have indicated that they do not have any relevant financial relationships or affiliations with any manufacturers or commercial products to disclose.

- There is no commercial interest support for this educational activity.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and do not necessarily represent the views, policies, and positions of the Indian Health Service (IHS), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
Personal Disclosures

• I am a cisgender female of Mexican-Yaqui and European descent
• I have an extensive family history of mental illness and substance abuse
• I have sought out and received my own mental health care
• I have both knowingly and unknowingly contributed to bias and most “isms,” and constantly work to improve upon these areas of growth
Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

• Recognize and manage trauma in Native American and Alaska Native youth and families.

• List three practical therapeutic interventions working with youth presenting clinically with trauma.

• Acquire new knowledge in understanding trauma within a Native American cultural context.
What are some examples of types of trauma?
Trauma and Social Location

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Early Death

Disease, Disability, and Social Problems

Adoption of Health-risk Behaviours

Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Scientific gaps

Early Death

Burden of disease, distress, criminalization, stigmatization

Coping

Allostatic Load, Disrupted Neurological Development

Complex Trauma/ACE

Social Conditions/Local Context

Generational Embodiment/Historical Trauma

Microaggressions, implicit bias, epigenetics

Conception to Death

Trauma and social location
Trauma in Indian Country

- The Indian Country Childhood Trauma Center (ICCTC) further defines trauma to address the specific conditions and experiences of American Indians and Alaska Natives as a “unique individual experience associated with a traumatic event or enduring conditions, which can involve an actual death or other loss, serious injury, or threat to a child’s well-being, often related to the cultural trauma, historical trauma, and intergenerational trauma that has accumulated in [Native] communities through centuries of exposure to racism, warfare, violence, and catastrophic disease.”¹
Compared to their non-Indian peers, Native American children are ______ likely to experience trauma.
Trauma’s Prevalence in Indian Country

- Compared to their non-Indian peers, Native American children are 2.5 times more likely to experience trauma.²
- Native American children experience a rate of child abuse and neglect of 14.6 per 1,000 children, compared to the rate for all children of 8.1 per 1,000.³
- Alcohol abuse, related to child abuse and neglect, is more likely to be reported for Native American families.⁴
- Violence is more likely to be reported among Native American families, both as an element of abuse and/or neglect and in general.⁵
- Adult native American men are incarcerated at a rate of 1,571.2 per 100,000, compared to 981.1 of all men,⁶ making it more likely that Native American youth live with the trauma of having an incarcerated parent.
Research Shows…

• There is little comprehensive data on rates of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for Native American youth. However, a study of Native American sixth graders from one reservation found that 75% had clinically significant levels of PTSD.\(^7\)

• Researchers have reported a 14% prevalence rate of Major Depressive Disorder among Native American adolescents.\(^8\)

• Suicide rates are 2.5 times the national rate for Native American youth 15 to 24 years old, with 11%-20% attempting suicide each year (3.5 times higher than the national average).\(^9/11\)

• 16% of Native American youth ages 12 and older report substance dependence or abuse.\(^{10}\)
Like other children, Native American children can react to trauma in any number of ways including guilt, helplessness, and withdrawal, risk-taking, mistrust, and social anxiety.

Repeated exposure to trauma results in the impaired ability to have positive relationships, communicate well, and demonstrate resiliency.

Trauma at a young age often leads to higher rates of behavioral health disorders in adolescence.
**Therapeutic Techniques**

- Traditional healing techniques
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Expressive Art Therapy
- Cognitive Processing Therapy
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy
- Biofeedback
Resources

5. Ibid.
Presenter Contact Information

- Kassandra Mason, LMFT
- Licensed Clinical Supervisor
- Southern Indian Health Council
- kmason@sihc.org
- (619) 445-1188 ext 207