

Congressional Baby Caucus Briefing on American Indian and Alaska Native Communities Features ACF Tribal Home Visiting and Tribal Early Learning Initiative Grantees



From left: Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Heather Hamlin (White Earth Nation, MN), Sarah Snetsinger (White Earth Nation, MN), Tarajeau Yazzie-Mintz (American Indian College Fund), Myra Parker (University of Washington), Carolyn Hornbuckle (National Congress of American Indians), Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA)

On November 5, 2015, Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA), co-chairs of the bipartisan [Congressional Baby Caucus](#), sponsored a briefing for Hill staff on early childhood issues in American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities. Titled “Creating a Path for our Children: Early Learning in Native Communities,” the briefing highlighted innovative and exciting efforts in AIAN communities to prevent disparities in early learning experiences and outcomes for infants and toddlers.

The briefing featured Carolyn Hornbuckle, JD (Mohawk) from the [National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center](#), Myra Parker, JD, Ph.D. (Mandan/Hidatsa) from the [Center of the Study of Health and Risk Behaviors](#) at the University of Washington, Tarajeau Yazzie-Mintz, Ed.D (Navajo) from the Wakanyeja “Sacred Little Ones” Early Childhood Education and K’e’ Early Childhood Initiatives at the [American Indian College Fund](#), and Sarah Snetsinger, RN, MCH Service Coordinator and Heather Hamlin, Parent Mentor, from the White Earth Home Visiting and [White Earth Coordinated Assessment, Resources and Education \(WECARE\)](#) programs. White Earth’s Home Visiting and WECARE programs have received funding through ACF’s [Tribal Home Visiting Program](#) and [Tribal Early Learning Initiative](#).

Following opening remarks from Rep. DeLauro and Rep. Hunter, where they shared their commitment to supporting AIAN communities and tribal sovereignty, the panelists emphasized the importance of providing quality early childhood opportunities and services to AIAN children and their families, stressing the importance of incorporating culture and language into programs. Ms. Hornbuckle discussed the need to increase federal resources for tribally-driven work that recognizes tribal

sovereignty and the federal-tribal trust responsibility. Dr. Parker discussed the urgency of better data and measures related to AIAN populations, including the more than 70 percent living in urban areas, to inform prevention efforts. Dr. Yazzie-Mintz spoke about innovative efforts at Tribal Colleges and Universities to leverage tribal resources to strengthen systems of care of young children in tribal communities – including pathways to teacher training, engaging families in children’s education, supporting early literacy, and integrating Native language and culture. Ms. Snetsinger and Ms. Hamlin shared stories about the impact home visiting programs can have on individual children and families, as well as the importance of coordinating across programs like Head Start, child care, and home visiting in communities to maximize the reach of services and improve families’ experiences through client-driven coordinated case management. All panelists emphasized the importance of giving tribal communities resources and flexibility to develop high-quality, evidence-informed programs and services that meet their culture and context.