

Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force

ISSUE PAPER 1

Ensuring Basic Human Welfare

The following issues and proposed solutions were identified by the Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force based on input from task force members representing the City of Albuquerque, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zia, the Navajo Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors. These will be the core issues and solutions presented to and discussed with Mayor Richard J. Berry.

Problem Statement: Like other homeless individuals in Albuquerque, Native American homeless individuals and families have a need to access facilities that are essential to meet their basic human welfare needs, including access to “transitional facilities.” Furthermore, there is a need for more day and night emergency shelters to support the safety and welfare of homeless Native Americans, especially throughout the evening hours. On the very basic human level, attaining access to showers and restrooms is imperative.

Actions Requested:

1. Develop a resource directory of existing programs and services available to all homeless persons and that also highlights programs and services specific to homeless Native Americans
2. Create web portal or other online mechanism for homeless Native American individuals or service providers to access information and resources
3. Host “Resource Days” specific to homeless Native Americans and vulnerable individuals, especially those on the verge of homelessness
4. Identify cost effective models for increasing the numbers of public restrooms and showers (i.e. Portland Loo model), and develop a timeline for implementation

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ISSUE PAPER 2

Identifying Modifiable Factors Associated with Homelessness

The following issues and proposed solutions were identified by the Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force based on input from task force members representing the City of Albuquerque, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zia, the Navajo Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors. These will be the core issues and solutions presented to and discussed with Mayor Richard J. Berry.

Problem Statement:

Homeless Native Americans and families in Albuquerque are unique and differ from other homeless subgroups because of their tribal histories and the challenging socioeconomic circumstances facing many tribal communities. Due to situations such as a perceived lack of engagement between tribal members and their leadership, sparse educational, vocational training, and employment opportunities, and access to conveniences within their tribal homelands, some Native Americans choose to move to urban areas. Once separated from their familiar support systems they often struggle due to a lack of knowledge and skills needed to successfully navigate urban life. The challenging and isolating circumstances of living in a city can further exacerbate the internal issues some individuals may already be facing, such as a loss of family connection and cultural ties, and financial hardships, which, in turn, can result in the onset of depression. The experience of homelessness creates further marginalization and increases exposure to violence and predatory acts due to physical, mental, and emotional vulnerabilities. Presently, there is a lack of awareness of resources available within the city and tribal homelands for homeless Native American individuals and families, and those who are on the verge of becoming homeless.

Actions Requested:

1. Support proposed N.M. Hate Crimes Act amendment
2. Involve existing organizations such as the Albuquerque Indian Center, Native American Community Academy, and First Nations Community HealthSource/All Nations Wellness and Healing Center, to examine existing assessments and analysis and determine why previous interventions have fallen short
3. Fund linkage between tribes and Albuquerque organizations
4. Fund resource information – information sharing on tribal organization level
5. Create public awareness about 311 resource phone number
6. Tribal entities identify centralized location to provide tribal specific information

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ISSUE PAPER 3

Identifying Homeless Native Americans

The following issues and proposed solutions were identified by the Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force based on input from task force members representing the City of Albuquerque, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zia, the Navajo Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors. These will be the core issues and solutions presented to and discussed with Mayor Richard J. Berry.

Problem Statement:

Presently, there is no existing mechanism to identify homeless Native American individuals in the City of Albuquerque or within tribal communities. Within the city, existing data collection activities among homeless individuals does not identify Native Americans by tribal affiliation. Further, tribal service providers lack a mechanism to coordinate directly with city and non-profit service providers. In order to establish tribal leadership partnership and attain tribal ownership of issues, data that identifies Native Americans by tribal affiliation are necessary. Developing a shared database for city and tribal service providers could enhance the linkage of services for the Native American homeless population. In addition to a need for a centralized system for locating tribal members that are homeless in the city, there exists a need for a liaison to coordinate and strengthen communication between the city and tribes.

Actions Requested:

1. Fast track implementation of Statewide Coordinated Assessment System to enhance existing HMIS framework, while ensuring all data collected contains tribal specific affiliation.
2. Consider various types of homelessness and align resources/services appropriately for families or individuals
3. Utilize other existing systems to identify homeless Native Americans
4. If capacity exists, request tribal enrollment offices to make monthly visits to the city to provide identification documents free of cost to homeless tribal members
5. Appoint a Tribal Liaison for the city to contact and coordinate with tribal leadership and tribal programs
6. Create and coordinate data system for tribal governments and liaison to share homeless data, as well as coordinate memorandum of agreement (MOA) that specify terms for data sharing

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ISSUE PAPER 4

Coordinating Services to Identify Gaps, Improve Delivery, and Facilitate Individual Self-Sufficiency

The following issues and proposed solutions were identified by the Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force based on input from task force members representing the City of Albuquerque, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zia, the Navajo Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors. These will be the core issues and solutions presented to and discussed with Mayor Richard J. Berry.

Problem Statement:

There is a lack of coordination and team approach among city, tribal, and non-profit service providers to specifically target homeless Native Americans. There is a need to integrate and coordinate services for homeless Native Americans city- and tribal-wide and to identify service needs gaps. It is a shared responsibility among city and tribal leadership to support efforts to strengthen the integration of services for Native American homeless individuals and families. Furthermore, there is a need to focus on long term stabilization for homeless individuals through case management, individual initiatives specific to vulnerable Native American youth, and mentorship/training to help attain the skills and competencies necessary to seek, obtain, and maintain employment.

Actions Requested:

1. Develop a system to provide resource opportunities (i.e. Mentorships through Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, National Indian Youth Leadership Program, New Day)
2. Develop venue or mechanism to foster collaboration and develop linkages between programs
3. Identify existing service utilization, including data from IHS, other service providers, and HMIS for case management.
4. Partner with research centers at universities to conduct gap analysis
5. Explore public – private – tribal partnerships to maximize federal funding for Medicaid, i.e. increase access to behavioral health services and primary care
6. Submit a proposal to the state legislature for an appropriation to assist/prioritize Native American support initiatives

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ISSUE PAPER 5

Increasing Services Access through Culturally-Centered Approaches

The following issues and proposed solutions were identified by the Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force based on input from task force members representing the City of Albuquerque, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zia, the Navajo Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors. These will be the core issues and solutions presented to and discussed with Mayor Richard J. Berry.

Problem Statement:

Gaps exist in services specific to Native American Homeless individuals and families. Some services are too restrictive and some service providers do not collaborate well enough to ensure the short- and long-term wellbeing of homeless Native Americans. On the service level, there is a perceived lack of cultural sensitivity and lack of awareness of Native Americans in general. Furthermore, there is a need for service centers where Native Americans can feel comfortable seeking services and can establish a sense of belonging. There is substantial unmet need for Native American spiritual and traditional healing services in the city, access to transportation within the city and to tribal homelands, and educational opportunities specific to Native Americans within K-12 schools and higher education institutions.

Actions Requested:

1. Streamline application processes among service providers, while eliminating duplication in assessment/intake
2. Expand access to emergency shelters and transitional housing
3. Examine existing cultural competency tools and curricula.
4. Deliver cultural humility training to service providers and other city employees who interact with Native Americans
5. Develop Native American advisory group to assist service providers at all levels with linkage to Native Healing practices and to evaluate cultural humility training
6. Reinstate the Mayor's Native American Commission

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ISSUE PAPER 6

Improving Community Relations with Native Americans

The following issues and proposed solutions were identified by the Albuquerque Native American Homelessness Task Force based on input from task force members representing the City of Albuquerque, the Pueblo of Laguna, the Pueblo of Zia, the Navajo Nation, and the All Pueblo Council of Governors. These will be the core issues and solutions presented to and discussed with Mayor Richard J. Berry.

Problem Statement:

To ensure that Native Americans are afforded opportunities to participate in a meaningful and healthy lifestyle, there is a need to educate the public about Native Americans, including their histories and contemporary challenges, especially homelessness. The city landscape should include evidence of Native American influence and involvement including arts, foods, historical contributions, contemporary achievements, and political engagement.

Actions Requested:

1. Build on existing “hubs” of activities/services that promote a sense of community through area organizations, such as the Albuquerque Indian Center, First Nations Community HealthSource/All Nations Wellness and Healing Center, National Indian Youth Council, and Native American Community Academy
2. Utilize public media to educate the community about Native Americans
3. Engage the private sector in the tangible support Native American-specific events such as the Albuquerque Native American Film Festival during Gathering of Nations Week in April, Santa Fe Indian Market in August, and/or Native American Heritage Month in November