

1980 Report of the Mini-Conference on the AI-AN Elderly

Issue: The economic status of the Indian elderly is even less than that of other older Americans.

Issue: Due to the unemployment rates, Indians show to have difficulty finding work. Unemployment rates are at 37%.

Issue: According to the 1970 census, 50% of the nation's Indian elderly had poverty level incomes, yet receive far less than they are proportionately entitled to from the various income entitlement programs.

Issue: Many Indian elderly may not receive the income they are due because of the complexity rules and regulations and they may never apply for benefits or fail to complete the application process.

Issue: Lack of outreach and programmatic information being made available to the Indian Community. There is a lack of representation of Indians as staff members of these various agencies.

Issue: Prevention of being institutionalized should be prevented by governmental agencies coordinating their efforts to provide in-home care such as transportation, nutrition, homemaker, home health, employment programs, and so on.

Issue: Traditions are dying and the Indian culture is changing since the younger generation is moving away and not learning from the elders.

Issue: Development of services that enhance the existing tendency toward family care would be welcomed by the Indian Community

Issue: In urban areas, elders cannot take advantage of tribal services or Indian Health Services programs as no Indian elders participate in programs off the reservation because urban areas are geared toward Indian people.

Issue: Indian housing is of poorer quality and is more crowded to dwell.

Issue: In 1979-1980, the elderly reported service outages of heat, water, and toilet systems at rates of 20%, 24%, and 15%; 44% of all Alaskan respondents reported they suffered a heat outage during the preceding winter.

Issue: Transportation is the most requested, the issue is compounded on reservation by severe climate and remoteness from health and social services, shopping facilities, medical care and even telephone service.

Issue: Reservation roads are unpaved and impassible during winter weather. Elders that are left in remote areas of the reservation find it extremely difficult to obtain even the essentials of life such as food, clothing, wood, and water

Issue: Increased energy costs have depended both housing and transportation concerns within the past few years as weatherization of homes, fuel assistance, and increased funding for reservation transportation

Issue: Elders feel that Indian culture characteristics is being lost such as respect, discipline, religious practices, language, and tribal ceremonies. These need to be taught.

Issue: Indian education should be emphasized in the hiring practices for educational programs of the Indian Education Act and use bilingual - bicultural teachers.

Issue: Education for the youth should include education for the elderly to assist them in leading a full and satisfying life and to better equip them to contribute to their families and communities.

Issue: Full religious freedom is still not accorded to Indian people

Issue: Weakening of extended family and declining role of the elders as teachers and advisors to younger generation

Issue: Urban migration weakens intergenerational bonds, removes young children from ongoing socialization in Indian Culture, and often leaves the elders without the care and companionship. Providing jobs so families can stay on the reservation would allow families to learn from elders.

Issue: Assistance should be offered to those that want it to care for their elders in the home.

Issue: Elders want to be involved with public education as a means of counteracting trends. Classes such as native language, tribal history, and traditional activities

Issue: Indian children should be placed in Indian homes as it's the best environment. Preferably, children should be with Indian family members.

Issue: For those elderly who have started raising grandkids, they simply cannot participate in Title III-C nutrition programs as they cannot afford to pay full price of the meal for their grandkids. These programs should not only keep the elders from needed services, but also prohibit a good opportunity for intergenerational learning and enjoyment.

Issue: Research is needed to identify the characteristics of the growing population. Such research could provide the basis for effective policy development and for planning more appropriate services for Indian elders.

Issue: An increase in the number of Indian people trained to carry out research in the social or biological sciences is badly needed and would likely help to alleviate many of the problems identified in the research workshops.