



Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board Inc.

Tóhajiilee Band of Navajos * Jicarilla Apache Nation * Mescalero Apache Tribe
Ramah Band of Navajos * Southern Ute Indian Tribe * Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

THE STD/HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAM AT THE ALBUQUERQUE AREA INDIAN HEALTH BOARD ANNOUNCES NAME CHANGE TO THE COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION AND RESILIENCY PROGRAM (CHERP)

Albuquerque, NM (February 3, 2021)—For the last 32 years, the STD/HIV/AIDS Prevention Program at the Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board (AAIHB), has served the 27 Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos by providing STD/HIV/AIDS prevention education, training, and technical assistance. With the support from our current Executive Director, Ayn N. Whyte, M.S., we began the process of creating a name that reflects our program values and aspirations to expand beyond STI/HIV services. Our discussions and vision for the future led our team to select the new name Community Health Education and Resiliency Program (CHERP).

CHERP provides strengths-based and trauma-informed services to create safe spaces for communities and community members seeking prevention, treatment, and testing services. The name change also positions the program to expand services into areas like harm reduction, substance use, and intimate partner violence, but keeping STI/HIV at its core.

“As the current Executive Director of AAIHB, I congratulate and support the team as they continue to lead the way in promoting health and wellness beyond HIV,” shares Ms. Whyte, who served as Program Director from 2010 to 2019. Savannah Gene, M.S., CHES assumed the role of Program Director in October 2019 and envisions a program “that leads and serves with the values of kinship and compassion,” which builds on the foundation of her predecessors, Ms. Whyte and Marie Kirk.

Over the last 10 years, the program has grown from a one-person program to a team of six and has expanded services outside of the STD/HIV prevention realm, including a youth program. The move to change our name began with the acknowledgement that sexual health education and terminology, such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), are consistently evolving and can unintentionally create stigma. This can result in discrimination, bias, and fear of seeking services for stigmatized health conditions, like HIV.

As we move forward, we see the program continuing to expand and ensure that we serve *with* and *by* the community to build on the resiliency rooted in our cultural values.

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