

TESTIMONY ON THE SPECIAL DIABETES PREVENTION INITIATIVE
“NATIVE YOUTH: PROMOTING DIABETES PREVENTION THROUGH HEALTH LIVING”

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

MARCH 29, 2017

SUBMITTED BY THE SALT RIVER PIMA MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY

Background

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community appreciates the opportunity to provide oral and written testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs on the Special Diabetes Prevention Initiative, particularly relating to prevention of diabetes among Native Youth through Healthy Living.

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (Community) is a federally recognized tribe created by federal Executive Order on June 14, 1879 and is the homeland of two distinct tribes; the Pima - ‘Onk Akimel O’odham’ (River People), and the Maricopa - ‘Xalychidom Piipaash’ (People who live toward the Water). The Community is comprised of 52,600 acres, with 19,000 held as a natural preserve, which are divided into Community-owned land and individual allotments. SRPMIC consists of two geographical areas; the Salt River and Lehi Communities that are separated by the Salt River, with the Lehi Community located south of the river. The Community lands are adjacent to the Phoenix metropolitan area in central Arizona and located within Maricopa County. SRPMIC shares a common boundary with the cities of Mesa, Tempe, and Scottsdale, town of Fountain Hills and Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation. Current total enrolled membership is 10,378 of which approximately 6,000 members reside within the Community’s boundaries.

Unlike many remotely located Indian reservations, SRPMIC lies within a county determined to be one of the most rapidly growing metropolitan populations, which has brought two major commuter freeways to the Community. However, the Community still lags far behind the United States and nearby adjacent cities in both social and economic development and experiences social and health problems similar to those found on more remotely located reservations.

Medical services are provided by a combination of Indian Health Service (Phoenix Indian Medical Center and the Salt River Health Clinic), regional healthcare corporations (Scottsdale Osborn Hospital and Mayo Clinic), and private practice providers located throughout the metropolitan area.

In addition, the Community supports a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which provides clinical staff working in coordination with federal providers at the Salt River

Health Clinic. Within HHS, there are Public Health workers, Behavioral Health therapists, Prevention and Intervention services, psychiatrists, WIC and other administrative staff. These programs are supported not only with tribal funds but other grant funding.

The Community has over 10,000 enrolled members and approximately 6000 of our members live in Salt River. 39% of our members are under age 18. 53% of our members are female and 47% are male. The five year rolling average age of death for 2016 and the four preceding years is 48.19 years of age for males and 58.09 years of age for females. The highest number of deaths occur in the age group 20 – 45. Many of the deaths are related to diabetes and its' complications.

Special Diabetes Prevention Initiative in SRPMIC

The **Community Council** has identified reducing the prevalence of diabetes in the Community as a needed priority. The Council views the prevalence of diabetes and resulting complications as one of the related causes to the early death rates in the Community. The consequence of these early deaths are devastating for the children, families and the Community.

Health issues in the Community have been identified by the elected Community Council, Diabetes Advisory Team (DAT), and obesity screening by the elementary and high school nurses.

Since many of our tribal members and their families receive health care through the Indian Health Service, we are able to pull the following data from the electronic health record system for the time period January 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016.

There are 1062 patients from the Salt River Community who are in the Diabetes Registry. We know from the data that there are more females than males who are diabetic and seeking medical care. We also know that the prevalence is highest in the age grouping 45-64 years of age. The diabetics in our Community are almost all Type 2 diabetics who are obese or severely obese with a majority being diagnosed 10+ years ago. There is a high number of these patients who have been diagnosed with hypertension (829) and also some patients diagnosed with cardiovascular disease (277). Almost half of those diagnosed with Type 2, have chronic kidney disease.

Gender Female= 652 Male= 410

Age <20 yr = 12 20-44= 278 45-64= 547 65>= 225

Type Type 1=1 Type 2= 1061

Duration of Diabetes

Less than 1 year = 33

Less than 10 years= 401

More than 10 years= 467

For those participating in Diabetes treatment, 26% use diet and exercise to help control their diabetes. They may also use the diet and exercise in combination with insulin 43% or metformin 31%.

The SRPMIC Diabetes Services Program, is community based and operates within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Health Services. The Salt River Health Clinic is a unique partnership between the Indian Health Service Phoenix Indian Medical Center (PIMC) and the DHHS. The Diabetes Services Program collaborates with the SRPMIC Clinic providers to ensure coordination of services, and to address the Community members' need for prevention and treatment at every stage

SDPI – Youth Focus

Approximately 3 years ago we had a 6 year old child diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes and we identified the youngest person being dialyzed was age 25. This situation led to greater partnering with the schools and families to have a greater impact on diabetes diagnoses and prevention.

Screening in the schools revealed that 52% of the students are above the 95th percentile for weight demonstrating a critical need for more intervention with children, youth, and their families focusing on increased fitness to reduce the risk for diabetes. The screening data suggests that children's weight begins to dramatically increase by the age of 9.

The following diabetes related health issues also impact the youth:

- The Community experience challenges and barriers for diabetes prevention, including the Community culture.
- Accessing nutritious food is difficult for Community residents.
- Existing diabetes intervention services need to be expanded.
- Programs do not always reach the people that need the services.
- People need the intervention to fit their needs.

Why the SDPI is Important to the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

➤ Innovative Programming

The SDPI grant has afforded several opportunities to the Community to explore innovative approaches to diabetes prevention and intervention that go beyond the traditional nutrition and exercise curricula. The SRPMIC Diabetes Services Program has hosted two instances of Yoga Teacher Training (YTT) in partnership with the non-profit Conscious Community Yoga to create certified yoga instructors. Yoga is a great low-impact introduction to exercise that takes a holistic approach to health and wellness. To date, approximately 12 individuals have completed the YTT and conduct yoga classes within the Department of Corrections (DOC), Journey to Recovery (residential treatment), and at the Fitness Center. Participants at the DOC have seen encouraging outcomes related

to blood pressure and an increased general sense of calmness. Interestingly, the DOC program has a higher attendance from the male population than the female population.

More recently, the SRPMIC Diabetes Services Program is sponsoring a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) approach to health and wellness called the 5 Elements Wellness Program. The Community has partnered with a local TCM practitioner, Dr. Qingsong Xiao, to conduct a 12-week program that includes exercise, wellness education, herbal supplements and acupuncture. Participants report incredible outcomes that include several point decreases in A1c readings, an increase in energy and activity level, better and more consistent sleep, and weight loss. This has become a very popular program within the Community, and HHS has included a children's component to the program that started at the end of February, 2017.

➤ **Collaborations with Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the School**

The Diabetes Program partners with other programs to reach all ages of the Community. The WIC supervisor has a team of four that works with families to educate on the importance of breastfeeding, preparing and eating nutritious meals and managing gestational diabetes. The fitness center staff also assist with offering child friendly exercises during FIT WIC sessions so parents learn about the importance of starting physical activity at a young age.

There are two schools on the reservation serving children from pre-school through 12th grade. The Diabetes program has been able to collaborate with the schools in teaching students about eating healthy and staying active. One initiative known as #GetFit, aims to teach student athletes in becoming role models, wellness champions, to fellow students. The program this year was expanded to reach the parents of student athletes and Physical Education students. Through this program families have the opportunity to learn healthy lifestyle behaviors as well as setting healthy goals as a family.

➤ **The Diabetes Camp**

The American Indian Youth Wellness (Diabetes Prevention) Camp was established in 1991. Through a collaborative partnership with the University of Arizona and other tribes these one week camps are continuing to be offered. Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community has been participating in camp since the mid 1900's. Every summer in June, the Diabetes Program has been able to pay for and send 20 students and 8 volunteers to camp. The camp involves American Indian youth from tribes across the Southwest, primarily Arizona, to a one week intensive residential camp. At camp, kids learn healthy eating habits and ways to make exercise fun, consistent, and habitual. The best part of camp is that activities take place in an American Indian context, deeply rooted in culture. This integration increases our effectiveness and makes health fun.

➤ **Community Wellness Activities**

Every year the SRPMIC Diabetes Services Program is able to organize and host several walks within the Community to encourage physical fitness and as outreach for the program itself. Families are encouraged to walk together, often you will see not only the parent, but also the grandparent participating. Additionally, the fitness staff are often

called upon by other departments to lead warm-up exercises for activities, i.e. the annual Fall Overhaul which is an Administration hosted event as a community service project for employees; collaborate on certain awareness campaigns such as walks for domestic violence, and suicide prevention.

Summary

The Community appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on the Special Diabetes Prevention Initiative and the impact that it has had on youth wellness. We appreciate the support of Congress in ensuring that the program continues to be available so that our goal of Community wellness can be achieved.