

SWO Awarded 5-year Federal grant, LINKING ACTIONS FOR UNMET NEEDS IN CHILDREN'S HEALTH (LAUNCH)

SWO was awarded a \$2,750,000 (\$550,000 per year) cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for an Indigenous LAUNCH project on July 23, 2018. SAMHSA is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

The aim of Indigenous LAUNCH is to improve the wellness of children 0 – 8 years of age by supporting the families and caregivers who are raising children. The project will advance SWO First 1,000 Days Initiative efforts to get upstream of adverse childhood experiences in order to promote lifelong wellness. Childhood trauma is known to be the single-most powerful predictor of a host of health problems. As Dr. Jack Shonkoff, Pediatrician and Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University points out in the award-winning documentary film *Resilience*, “*If we want to produce dramatic impacts on the outcomes for kids experiencing toxic stress, we have to transform the lives of the adults who are taking care of them.*” This is exactly what SWO LAUNCH intends to do!

The Indigenous LAUNCH goal is for children to thrive in safe, supportive environments and enter school ready to learn and able to succeed. In order to achieve this goal, SWO plans to expand and enhance its home visiting capacities through replication of the Family Spirit Program developed by the Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health. Family Spirit is the only evidence-based, home-visiting program ever designed specifically for Native families. The project will also implement the Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation model, another evidence-based project that teams a mental health professional with early childhood program staff and caregivers to improve the social, emotional and behavioral health of children in early childhood programs. The third vital partnership is with SWO's Dakota Language Institute to adapt the Family Spirit workbook and curricular materials, as well as to serve as a language and cultural advisor in planning and implementation of the project.

SWO LAUNCH will start around October 1st with several months of the first year devoted to recruitment, training and development, which is essential because the “L” in LAUNCH is for

linking. The project application itself has an unusual history. It was submitted in February 2017 but not processed when SAMHSA determined the Agency did not have funds for new grants last year. Fifteen months later in May 2018, SWO was contacted by SAMHSA and responded that it would still like to have the grant proposal reviewed this year. SAMHSA expected to fund only thirteen Indigenous LAUNCH projects nationwide when they issued the request for proposals in December 2016.

Later this summer, once SWO updates the budget and gets some necessary infrastructure in place, recruitment of the LAUNCH Project Director will take place. Then a licensed clinical mental health professional with experience in infant and early childhood mental health, a home-visiting paraprofessional who will outreach to families, and a data specialist responsible for record-keeping and reporting will be hired by that Director. A unique aspect of Indigenous LAUNCH is to recruit a community member consultant to advise and guide the project. Therefore, a staff of four plus the Community Partner will operate the project.

The Indigenous LAUNCH proposal was authorized by Tribal Council Resolution No. SWO-17-009 on February 8, 2017. A project development team assisted First 1,000 Days Initiative Lead, SWO Health Coordinator Sara DeCoteau. Besides Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health, the following partners submitted much-appreciated letters of commitment: SWO Early Childhood Intervention Program, SWO Head Start, SWO Dakota Language Institute, SWO Community Health Education Program, SWO Dakota Pride Center, Tribal Education Department, SWO Health Administration, SWO Cavity-Free Initiative, Sisseton Indian Health Service, South Dakota Department of Health (WIC / Bright Start), Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, and the North Dakota State University Department of Health. In addition, the SWO Behavioral Health Department and Tribal Secretary entered into Memorandum of Agreement for this grant. Representatives from these programs (and others) will be recruited to serve on the Young Child Wellness Advisory Committee, responsible for the "linking" function of SWO LAUNCH.

For more information about the SWO First 1,000 Days Initiative or the SWO Indigenous LAUNCH grant, please visit the website: <http://swofirst1000days.com/> or contact Health Coordinator Sara DeCoteau at 742-3697.