



# Tribal: Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency

By the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Center for American Progress

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Three percent of funds from the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting, or MIECHV, program are set aside annually in order to meet the needs of Native American families living in tribal communities. The Tribal MIECHV program provides funding to the South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency, or SPIPA, a tribally chartered intergovernmental agency that provides services, technical assistance, and planning support to each of the five consortium tribes, as well as to eligible Native Americans residing within the SPIPA service area in western Washington state. The agency uses MIECHV funds to provide evidence-based home visiting services and build the infrastructure needed to support the programs, which had not been operating prior to MIECHV. MIECHV is the primary source of funding for the SPIPA tribal home visiting program, which is instrumental in reinvigorating culture and traditions within the tribal communities.

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## Success and Innovation

Integration of Positive Indian Parenting curriculum within Parent as Teachers model SPIPA's MIECHV-funded home visiting program, called the Healthy Families Project, or HFP, utilizes the Parents as Teachers, or PAT, evidence-based home visiting model, which is flexible and can be adjusted to best meet the needs of each tribal community. SPIPA has enhanced the PAT model with cultural adaptations, including the Positive Indian Parenting, or PIP, curriculum, which is designed to help Native American parents connect with their culture, learn a blend of traditional parenting techniques, and acquire new skills. SPIPA also created parenting materials for home visitors to use with Native American families, which include activities that incorporate tribal culture and language. For instance, instead of using finger paint, parents can show children how to collect and paint with local berries.



## SPIPA MIECHV at a glance

**Total federal MIECHV funding:**  
\$465,000 from formula grant funding per year

**Lead agency:**  
SPIPA

**Number of communities served:**  
four tribal and two urban Native American communities in western Washington state

**MIECHV-funded home visiting models:**  
Parents as Teachers, or PAT

**Families served:**  
SPIPA has funding to serve 75 active families; cumulatively, the program has served 140 families

### Building professional capacity within communities

To further integrate tribal culture and language into the home visiting programs, SPIPA hired home visitors from within their respective tribal communities. Prior to MIECHV, there were no trained paraprofessionals capable of providing home visiting services. To address this, SPIPA conducted intensive training upon hiring home visitors and provided ongoing professional development. SPIPA administrators identified this strategy of hiring from within the tribe and training these new home visitors as a unique opportunity to build professional capacity and create jobs within the tribal communities. Knowing that the home visitors are also members of their tribes has made families more eager to enroll in the program.

### Parenting group classes

To supplement the positive parenting practices provided through home visits, SPIPA established ongoing parenting classes at every home visiting site. Prior to MIECHV, parenting classes open to the community were not available. These classes provide essential information on child development and parenting education topics and also utilize the PIP curriculum, further promoting the goal of reviving tribal culture within the communities.

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## Challenges

SPIPA was required to quickly develop six new home visiting programs in the targeted communities. SPIPA administrators stated that having more time to focus on start-up activities, infrastructure and capacity building, and staff training prior to beginning service delivery would have been beneficial. Home visiting was a new service within these tribal communities, so programs had to educate the community about the benefits of home visiting in order to attract families to enroll in services. Furthermore, it was difficult for the home visitors, who were unfamiliar with a start-up culture, to understand the rapid timeframes and constantly evolving policies and procedures, which initially led to high staff turnover.

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## Looking ahead

### Expanding and improving the HFP infrastructure

SPIPA administrators are now focused on refining and improving the home visiting system that they have created. They plan to amend policies and procedures as needed in order to ensure proper documentation, fidelity to the model, coordination and conformity among staff, and quality improvement through the use of data.

## SPIPA MIECHV at a glance

### **Additional funding for home visiting:**

four home visiting sites receive supplemental funding from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, program

### **Identified risks targeted by MIECHV:**

infant mortality and preterm births; substance abuse; child health and safety; maternal tobacco use; teen pregnancy; domestic violence; unemployment; and poverty

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## Additional information

SPIPA's MIECHV program information on the SPIPA website: <http://www.spipa.org/>

For a copy of SPIPA's MIECHV Needs Assessment or other MIECHV-related information, contact Carmen Kalama, healthy families project director, at [kalama@spipa.org](mailto:kalama@spipa.org) or Jen Olson, data analyst, at [olson@spipa.org](mailto:olson@spipa.org).

Source: Interview with Penny K. Schumacher, former healthy families coordinator, South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency, October 2014.

“Without MIECHV, we wouldn't have any of these home visiting programs. It is bringing awareness that these services are needed and valuable to the community.”  
– SPIPA home visiting coordinator

This profile was written as part of a larger study to identify how states are using Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting, or MIECHV, funds to advance state home visiting systems. For a summary report and additional profiles about home visiting, visit [clasp.org](http://clasp.org) or [americanprogress.org](http://americanprogress.org).