American Indian Life Skills (AILS)

Date: 2007 (For resources, this is the publication date. For programs, this is the date posted.)

Information

Type: Program/Practice, Education/Training Program, Program with Evidence of Effectiveness
Organization: University of Washington Press
Costs: See the archived NREPP listing [1].

Contact

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American Indian Life Skills (AILS) is a universal, school-based, culturally grounded, life-skills training program that aims to reduce high rates of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) adolescent suicidal behaviors by reducing suicide risk and improving protective factors. The curriculum includes between 13 to 56 lesson plans and is typically delivered over 30 weeks during the school year or as an afterschool program, with students participating in lessons three times per week. The curriculum emphasizes social–cognitive skills training and includes seven main themes: 1) building self-esteem, 2) identifying emotions and stress, 3) increasing communication and problem-solving skills, 4) recognizing and eliminating self-destructive behavior, 5) information on suicide, 6) suicide intervention training, and 7) setting personal and community goals. The curriculum also incorporates three domains of well-being that are specific to tribal groups: 1) helping one another, 2) group belonging, and 3) spiritual belief systems and practices. Lessons are interactive and incorporate situations and experiences relevant to AI/AN adolescent life such as friendship issues, rejection, divorce, separation, unemployment, and problems with health and the law. Lessons may be delivered by teachers working with community resource leaders and representatives of local social service agencies.

AILS is the currently available version of the former Zuni Life Skills Development program, which was developed with cultural components relevant to the people of the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico, including Zuni norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes; sense of self, space, and time; communication style; and rewards and forms of recognition. The Zuni curriculum served as the basis for the broader AILS curriculum that is now in use, which can be used with other AI/AN populations when implemented with appropriate and culturally specific modifications.

Designation as a “Program with Evidence of Effectiveness”

SPRC designated this intervention as a “program with evidence of effectiveness” based on its inclusion in SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP).

Outcome(s) Reviewed (Evidence Rating)*

- Depression and Depressive Symptoms (Promising)
- Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors (Promising)
Self-concept (Ineffective)

Read more about this program’s ratings [1].

* NREPP changed its review criteria in 2015. This program was reviewed under the post-2015 criteria. To help practitioners find programs that fit their needs, NREPP reviews the evidence for specific outcomes, not overall programs. Each outcome was assigned an evidence rating of Effective, Promising, or Ineffective. A single program may have multiple outcomes with different ratings. When considering programs, we recommend (a) assessing whether the specific outcomes achieved by the program are a fit for your needs; and (b) examining the strength of evidence for each outcome.

Implementation Essentials

* Prior to launching the program, crisis management protocols should be fully implemented and adult leaders should be identified and prepared for their roles in the program.

2012 NSSP Objectives Addressed:

Objective 3.1: Promote effective programs and practices that increase protection from suicide risk.
Objective 5.2: Encourage community-based settings to implement effective programs and provide education that promote wellness and prevent suicide and related behaviors.
Objective 5.3: Intervene to reduce suicidal thoughts and behaviors in populations with suicide risk.

Populations: Youth, Adolescents, Racial and Ethnic Groups, American Indians and Alaska Natives
Settings: American Indian/Alaska Native Settings, Schools, Middle School, High School
Planning and Implementing: Culturally Based Practices
Strategies: Identify and Assist, Life Skills and Resilience

Links within this resource

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