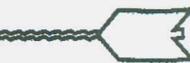




# INTER TRIBAL COUNCIL



## of ARIZONA, INC.

September 11, 2009

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 YAVAPAI PRESCOTT INDIAN TRIBE

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Tribal Leaders (AZ)  
 Tribal Health Directors  
 Tribal Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse Directors  
 Indian Health Service Mental Health Branch Chiefs

FROM: ITCA, Inc.

SUBJECT: State/Tribal Behavioral Health Issues Update-Involuntary Commitment

In prior years the ITCA staff, tribal and IHS behavioral health staff began meeting monthly with representatives of the Arizona State Hospital (AzSH), including its Chief Medical Officer and counsel from the Attorney General's office, to examine issues related to the involuntary commitment process for individuals committed through tribal courts and comity of tribal court orders by the State Superior Courts. Among concerns identified was that one of the major difficulties for American Indians was a lack of participation in programs and services provided through the state Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHAs) for the seriously mentally ill.

In 2008, a workgroup was established by the Arizona Department of Health Services/Division of Behavioral Health Services (ADHS/DBHS) to examine these issues in detail and develop a training curriculum for this process. Staff from ITCA, AzSH, and the Attorney General's office and from the Arizona Division of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS) constituted membership of this workgroup. The Advisory Council on Indian Health Care staff began to participate. The workgroup began to focus on addressing the involuntary commitment process in terms of needed coordination between tribes, RBHA's and AzSH in order for individuals committed through tribal courts to be better served.

In August 2008, all tribal behavioral health departments were invited to participate in a forum with the Arizona State Hospital administration and staff and representatives of DBHS to discuss difficulties with access to behavioral health care for individuals requiring inpatient services. The results of this forum and the evaluation of the involuntary commitment process were presented to senior management at the DBHS. A second forum was held in March 2009 for RBHA directors and key staff.

The Director of DBHS gave a keynote address stressing the importance of serving the American Indian population on and off the reservations. Barriers to service identified at the tribal forum were discussed by representatives from AHCCCS and the RBHA contract administrators.

Concurrent with the work of the Involuntary Commitment Work Group, a number of changes have occurred at DBHS and within AzSH during the last year that benefits American Indians in need of inpatient behavioral health services.

- The Arizona State Hospital has a case worker assigned to work with tribal behavioral health departments on the admission, case management and discharge processes.
- The Arizona Attorney General representing AzSH processes tribal court commitment orders within 24 hours of receipt.
- All RBHAs now have tribal liaisons to coordinate services for the Native American population within their geographic service area. The RBHAs are having regular meetings with tribal and IHS behavioral health service providers on available services and other issues.
- Tribes and RBHAs are beginning to develop letters of agreement covering issues of concern including providing RBHA services on reservations such as crisis intervention. RBHAs are also in the process of developing regional tribal behavioral health forums for tribes in their geographic service areas.
- Training on the tribal court involuntary commitment process is being developed by DBHS for RBHA, tribal and IHS behavioral health staff and judicial personnel. It will focus on particular issues unique to tribal populations including Indian law, tribal jurisdiction, the court processes and payment for services. This training will also include discussions about improving the continuum of care for Native Americans that receive inpatient care. The training sessions are being scheduled in late October thru the second week in November.
- ADHS/BHS has agreed to sponsor a statewide American Indian Behavior Health Reform Forum in 2010.
- DBHS held public forums throughout the State seeking input for the 5 year Request for Proposal (RFP) for new RBHA contracts. Information is available at <http://www.azdhs.gov/bhs/>. DBHS is considering the concerns of tribes in changes to the RBHA contracts for which the RFP is being drafted. Comments should be submitted to [GreaterAZRFPComments@adhs.gov](mailto:GreaterAZRFPComments@adhs.gov).

Please contact Alida Montiel of ITCA, Inc. at (602) 258-4822, extension 1543, or at [Alida.Montiel@itcaonline.com](mailto:Alida.Montiel@itcaonline.com) with questions, concerns or comments regarding this memorandum. It is also suggested that you contact Lydia Hubbard-Pourier of DBHS, to provide information regarding the agency's tribal activities. She can be contacted at (602) 364-1745 or at [hubbarl@azdhs.gov](mailto:hubbarl@azdhs.gov).

xc: Lydia Hubbard-Pourier  
Michael Allison