

Dear Tribal Leaders:

Since it was enacted in 1996, section 510 of Title V of the Social Security Act has been a key component of the nation's success with welfare reform that has encouraged work, marriage, and personal responsibility. By funding grants to the States to provide abstinence education, section 510 reinforces those goals by acquainting young people with the health, psychological, emotional, and social benefits of keeping sexual activity, pregnancy, and childbearing in marriage. Because of its promise and success, Congress recently reauthorized section 510 through June 30, 2009.

Native American tribes have every reason to take advantage of this funding in light of the documented correlations between abstinence and a host of positive youth outcomes in measures such as educational achievement, emotional well-being, and responsible behavior. Furthermore, abstinence until marriage has been linked to positive economic outcomes for communities.

Unlike many other federal social service programs that explicitly designate funding for Tribes, section 510 funds are awarded only to States. Yet Tribes can nonetheless apply to their respective states for abstinence education funding. Even if they reside in states that are not currently accepting section 510 money, Tribes can petition and encourage their respective state(s) to accept the money so that Tribes and tribal organizations do not lose out on their fair share of these important social service resources.

Even if a Tribe or tribal organization receives a grant through the Community Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) program, the section 510 program represents another revenue stream to help Tribes develop strategies to address the social, economic, and health needs of their young people. Keep in mind that abstinence programs are anything but monolithic; the more than 700 abstinence programs that have since 1998 received federal grants, whether through section 510 or CBAE, involve numerous approaches. Activities and programs that states fund include but are not limited to adult and peer mentoring, school-based programs (before, during, or after school), as well community sessions open to both parents and teens. Of course, abstinence programs and services can be tailored to the indigenous needs and concerns that face Native American communities.

If you would like to add these indispensable tools to the social programs that serve your people, contact your respective state abstinence education director or coordinator to learn how your Tribe can apply for a grant. To contact your state coordinator, use this map on our FYSB website that breaks down, state by state, the name and contact information for the state coordinators:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/youthdivision/programs/locate.htm>

Should you have questions about abstinence education in general and section 510 programs in particular, please contact me, as these programs hold great promise for Native American young people.

Sincerely,