Native Talents

South Dakota Urban Indian Health makes HIV a big part of its primary care offerings.

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Health care providers at the three South Dakota Urban Indian Health (SDUIH) clinics primarily serve Native Americans. It's a population at heightened risk for HIV, says Tami Hogie-Lorenzen, CNP, adding that many clients "come to SDUIH from the reservations for their HIV care and screening because they worry about confidentiality." So it's good news that SDUIH is integrating HIV into its primary care offerings. In fact, the AIDS Education & Training Centers National Center for HIV Care in Minority Communities—a group led by HealthHIV, which trains health centers around the country about HIV care—named SDUIH an HIV Primary Care Health Center of the Month.

With the help of HealthHIV, staff at the South Dakota clinics have built up their HIV testing programs, data collection systems, behavioral health intervention services and their ability to medically manage HIV. "Everyone at the health center has made a huge effort to break down barriers, combat stigma and educate themselves about HIV," says Stephen Perez, RN, a clinical specialist with HealthHIV.

Native Americans with HIV see a short time from diagnosis to death from AIDS, explains Hogie-Lorenzen, who is the HIV team leader at SDUIH. "Therefore, our focus is on the need to screen and diagnose clients at an earlier stage of their illness." It's a focus and dedication we'd like to see at all clinics nationwide.

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