



**TRIBAL YOUTH
RESOURCE CENTER**

Youth Healing to Wellness Courts 101

Date: January 22, 2026

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WELCOME!

Opening in a good way

OJJDP

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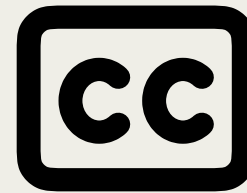
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Before We Get Started...

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Tribal Law & Policy Institute

A Native American Operated Non-Profit:

www.Home.TLPI.org



Dedicated to providing free publication resources, comprehensive training, and technical assistance for Native nations and tribal justice systems in pursuit of our vision to empower Native communities to create and control their own institutions for the benefit of all community members, now, and for future generations.



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OUR VISION

Envisioning a future where Indigenous youth thrive through traditional life ways

OUR PURPOSE

Enhancing the opportunities for Indigenous communities to expand their potential in protecting and nurturing their most sacred asset – the youth.

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Presenter



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Learning Objectives

Participants knowledge on the following will be increased:

1. What Tribal youth are experiencing with alcohol/substance use in Indian country
2. What interventions, supports and services Tribal youth with court involvement and alcohol/substance use need
3. The YHWC model and the Tribal Key Components

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What attributes do we hope our youth will have?

Self-worth

Cultural identity

Coping skills

Good relative

Leadership

Autonomy

Stability

Life goals

Education

Early awareness

No substance use



The Native Youth Community Adaptation
Leadership Congress (NYCALC)

Can you think of others?

**as identified by past Tribal Youth Healing to
Wellness Court team members*

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What are the characteristics (challenges) of youths typically eligible for a YHWC?



Native Youth in Northern California

Addiction *Truancy* *Substance Use Disorder*
Fighting *Gangs* *Behavioral health issues*
Suicide *Stealing*
Drop out *Running away* *Bullying*
Substance Abuse *Family problems*
Trouble in school *Legal problems*
No parents *Anger* *Not at grade level*
Houseless *Living with grandparents* *No cultural connection*

Can you think of others?

**as identified by past Tribal Youth Healing to Wellness Court team members*

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Annual Native Youth for Justice Organizing Academy in Los Angeles, CA

What things might these youths need from our Tribal governments?

- Trauma services*
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment*
- Mentors*
- Educational assessments & plans*
- Peer support*
- Supervision*
- Mental Health Treatment*
- Restorative practices*
- Wellness (case) assessments & plans*
- Life skills classes*
- Parenting classes*
- Housing support*
- Time & attention*
- Prosocial activities*
- Criminal thinking counseling*
- Recognition*
- Medical care*
- Family therapy*
- Cultural activities*
- Reinforcement of the positives*
- Budgeting*
- Accountability*
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*
- Goal setting*
- College or job readiness activities*
- Community connection activities*

Can you think of others?

**Elements that may be included in the YHWC phases & requirements for youth*

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What we know (the data)

About Native Adolescent Substance Use

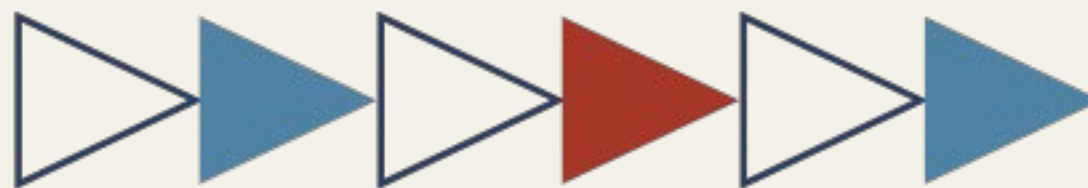
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Polling Questions



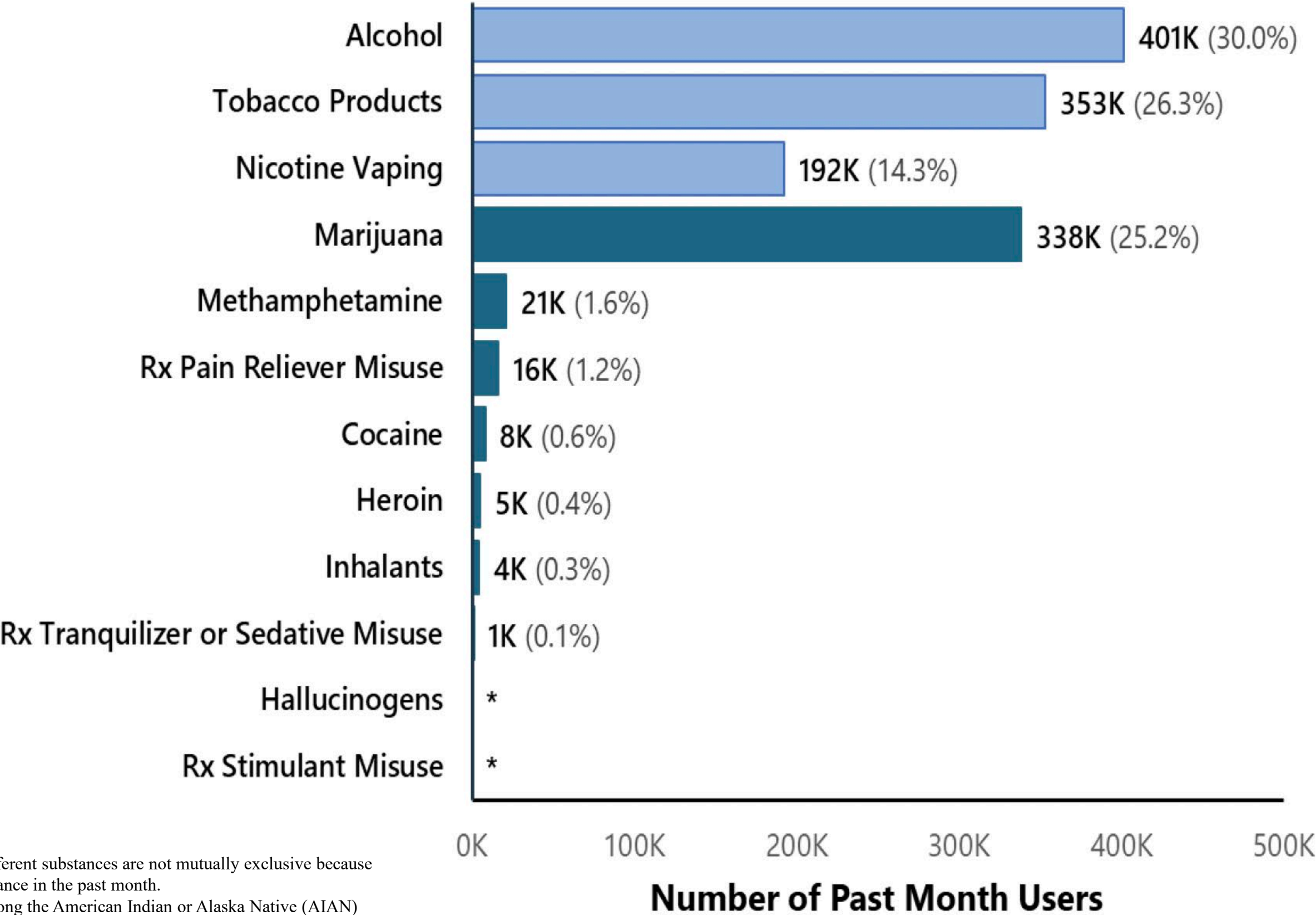
Answers will be anonymous



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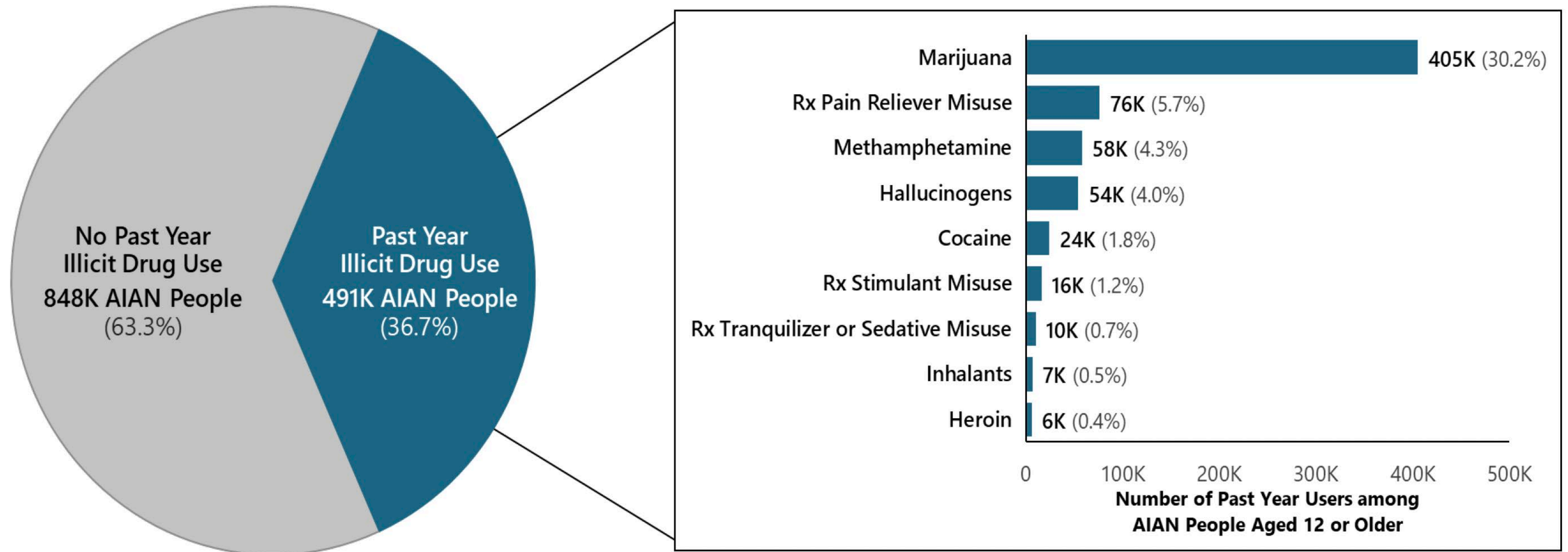


Past Month Substance Use: Among AIAN People Aged 12 or Older

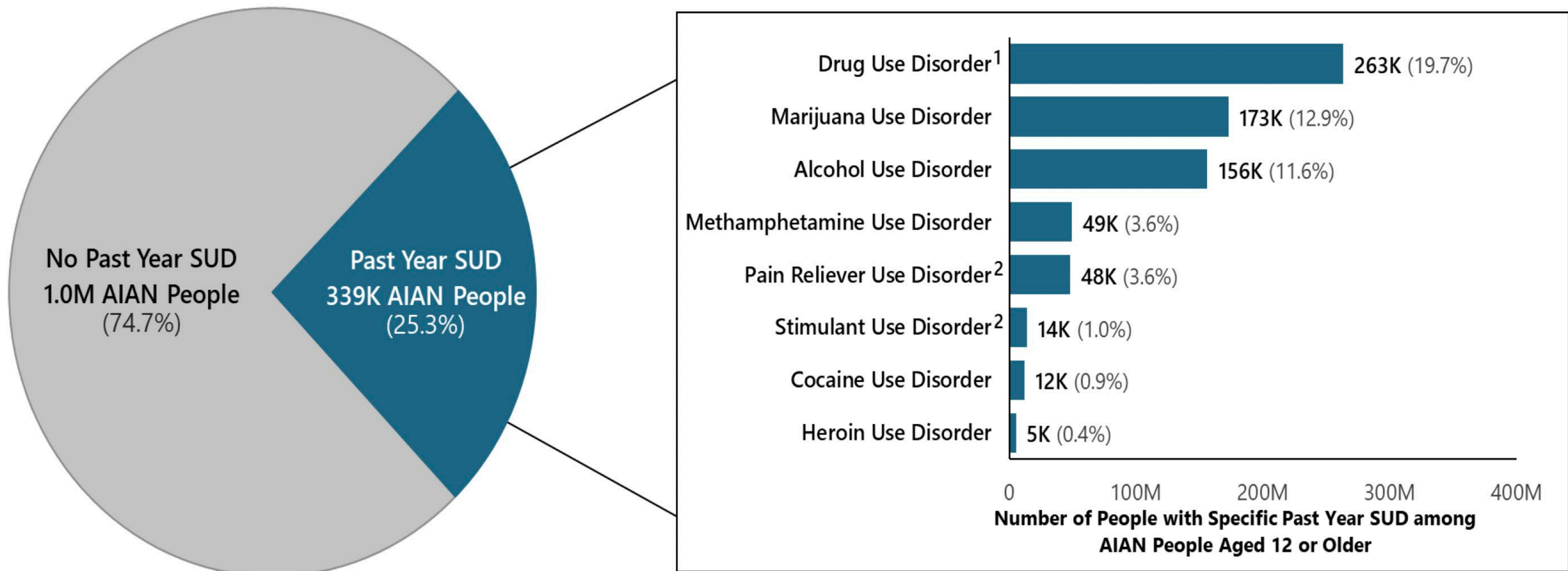


*Low precision; no estimate reported.
Rx = Prescription.
Note: The estimated numbers of current users of different substances are not mutually exclusive because people could have used more than one type of substance in the past month.
2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Among the American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN)
Population Aged 12 or Older

Past Year Illicit Drug Use: Among AIAN People Aged 12 or Older



Past Year Substance Use Disorder (SUD): Among AIAN People Aged 12 or Older



Note: The estimated numbers of people with substance use disorders are not mutually exclusive because people could have use disorders for more than one substance.

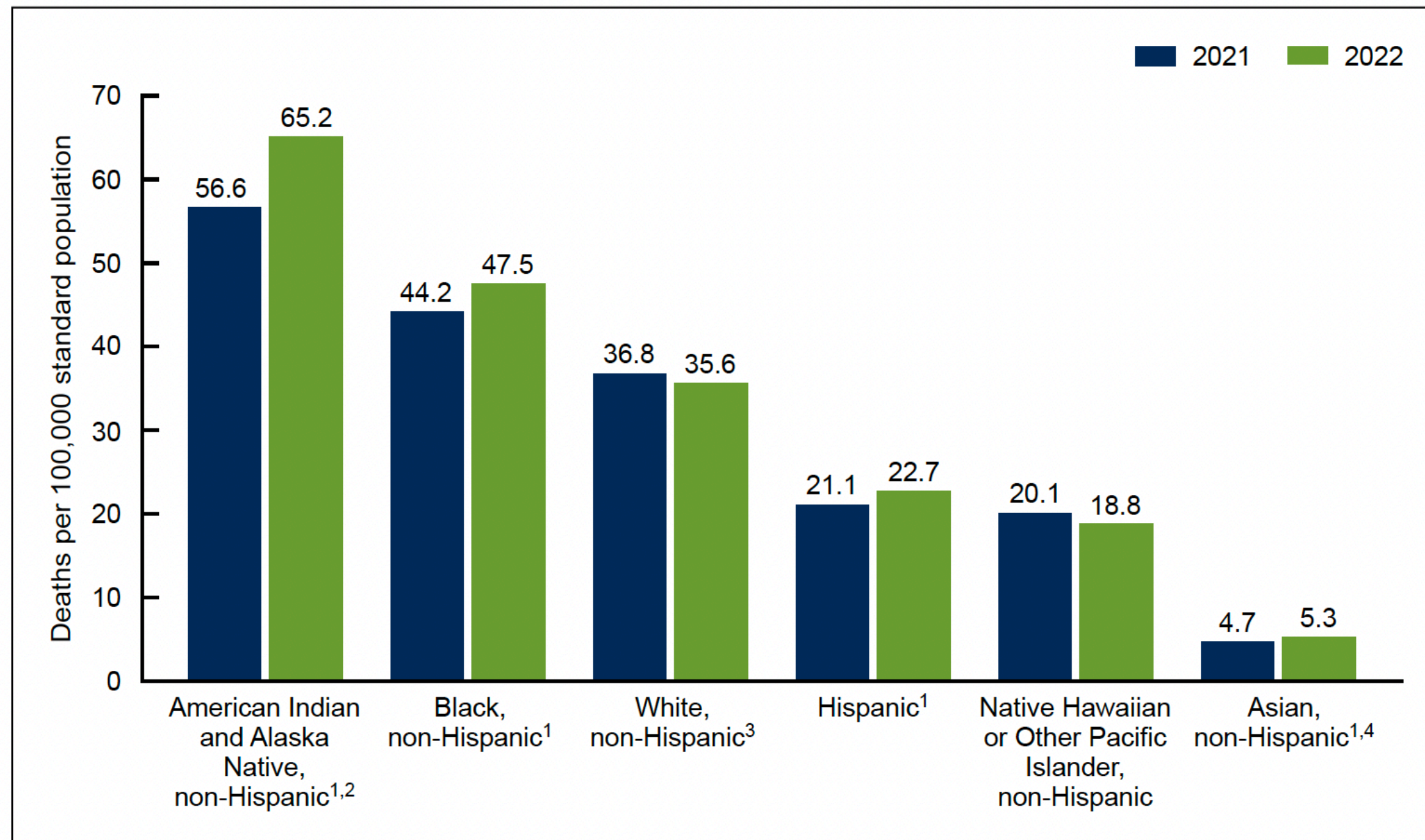
1 Includes data from all past year users of marijuana, cocaine heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants, methamphetamine, and prescription psychotherapeutic drugs (i.e., pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, or sedatives).

2 Includes data from all past year users of the specific prescription drug.

2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Among the American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) Population Aged 12 or Older

Age-adjusted Rates of Drug Overdose Deaths for AIAN People (2021-2022)

Figure 3. Age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths, by race and Hispanic origin: United States, 2021 and 2022



- In both 2021 and 2022, age-adjusted rates were highest for American Indian and Alaska Native non-Hispanic people (56.6 deaths per 100,000 standard population and 65.2, respectively)
- American Indian and Alaska Native people experienced the largest percent increase in the age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths from 2021 to 2022, with the rate increasing 15.0% from 56.6 to 65.2

¹Rate in 2022 significantly higher than in 2021, $p < 0.05$.

²Group with highest rate in 2021 and 2022, $p < 0.05$.

NOTES: Misclassification of race and Hispanic origin on death certificates results in the underestimation of death rates by as much as 34% for American Indian and Alaska Native non-Hispanic people. Drug overdose deaths were identified using International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision underlying cause-of-death codes X40–X44, X60–X64, X85, and Y10–Y14.

Age-adjusted death rates were calculated using the direct method and the 2000 U.S. standard population.

National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, mortality data file.

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The Youth Healing to Wellness Court (YHWC) Model

Based on the Key Components of a Tribal Healing to Wellness Court

AND

The Best Practices of a Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (JDTC)

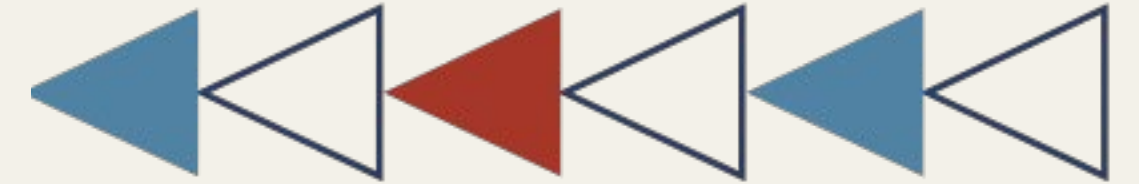


Colville tribal member Thomas Lezard completed the Colville Tribal Healing to Wellness Court

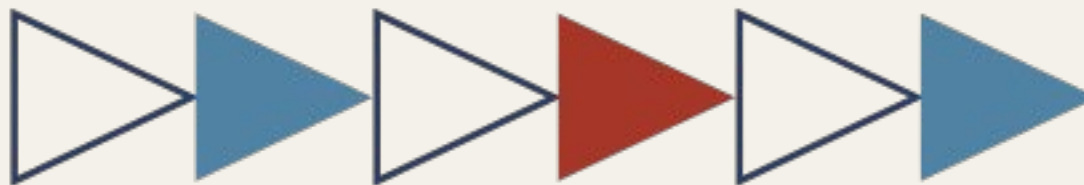
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Polling Questions



Answers will be anonymous



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What is a YHWC?

A Tribal Youth Healing to Wellness Court:

- Is a type of therapeutic and cultural intervention for youth with substance use (and sometimes mental health) disorders
- Also has a primary goal is to reduce future juvenile or criminal court involvement (to reduce "recidivism")
- Identifies and builds on youth and family strengths and resilience
- Is Tribally adapted
- Is implemented in a respectful and sensitive manner
- Includes treatment and other approaches designed for adolescents that incorporate Tribal worldview, values, and ways



The tuuCai Wellness Court, of the the Southern Ute Tribal Court

Judge Scott Moore and Senior Probation Officer Vanessa Torres wrap Jasmine Weaver in a Pendleton blanket in celebration of completing her time in the tuuCai Wellness Court on Thursday, Sep. 10 in the Southern Ute Tribal Courtroom.

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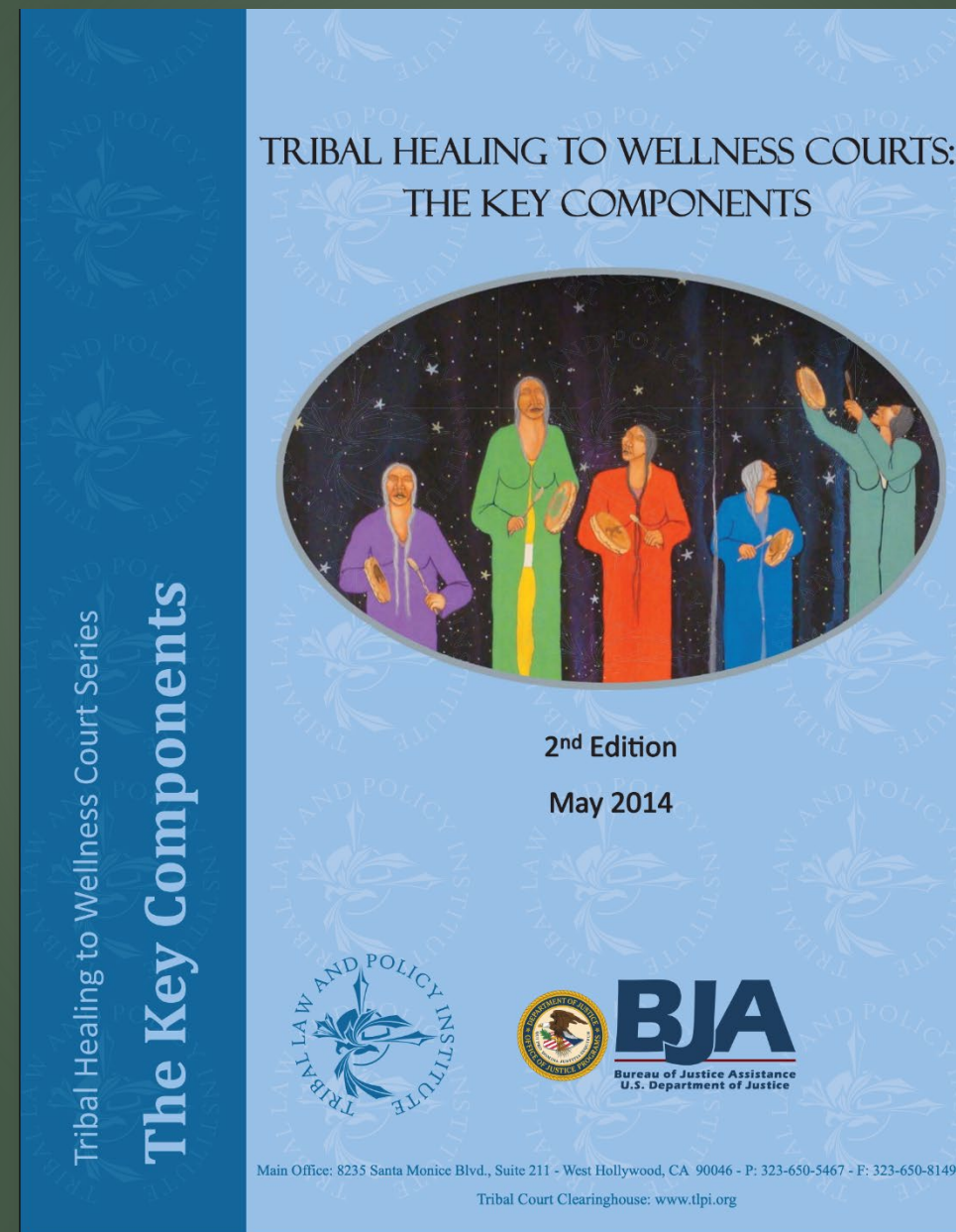
What are the YHWC outcome goals?

Examples of YHWC outcome goals:

1. Increase the number of Tribal youths who remain alcohol and drug-free
2. Reduce the number of alcohol and/or drug-involved Tribal youths in the state and Tribal juvenile and criminal justice systems
3. Increase the number of Tribal youths graduating from high-school or receiving GEDs
4. Increase the number of Tribal youths living in stable living conditions
5. Increase the number of Tribal youths engaged in alcohol and/or drug-free pro-social activity, including cultural activities
6. Increase the number of Tribal youths participating in job training or employed
7. Increase Tribal youth and family functioning

The Tribal Key Components

For Youth Healing to Wellness Courts (YHWCs)



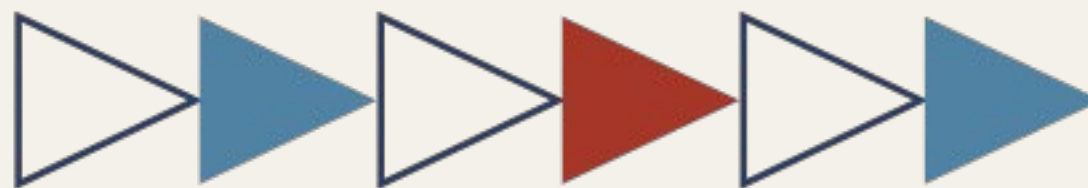
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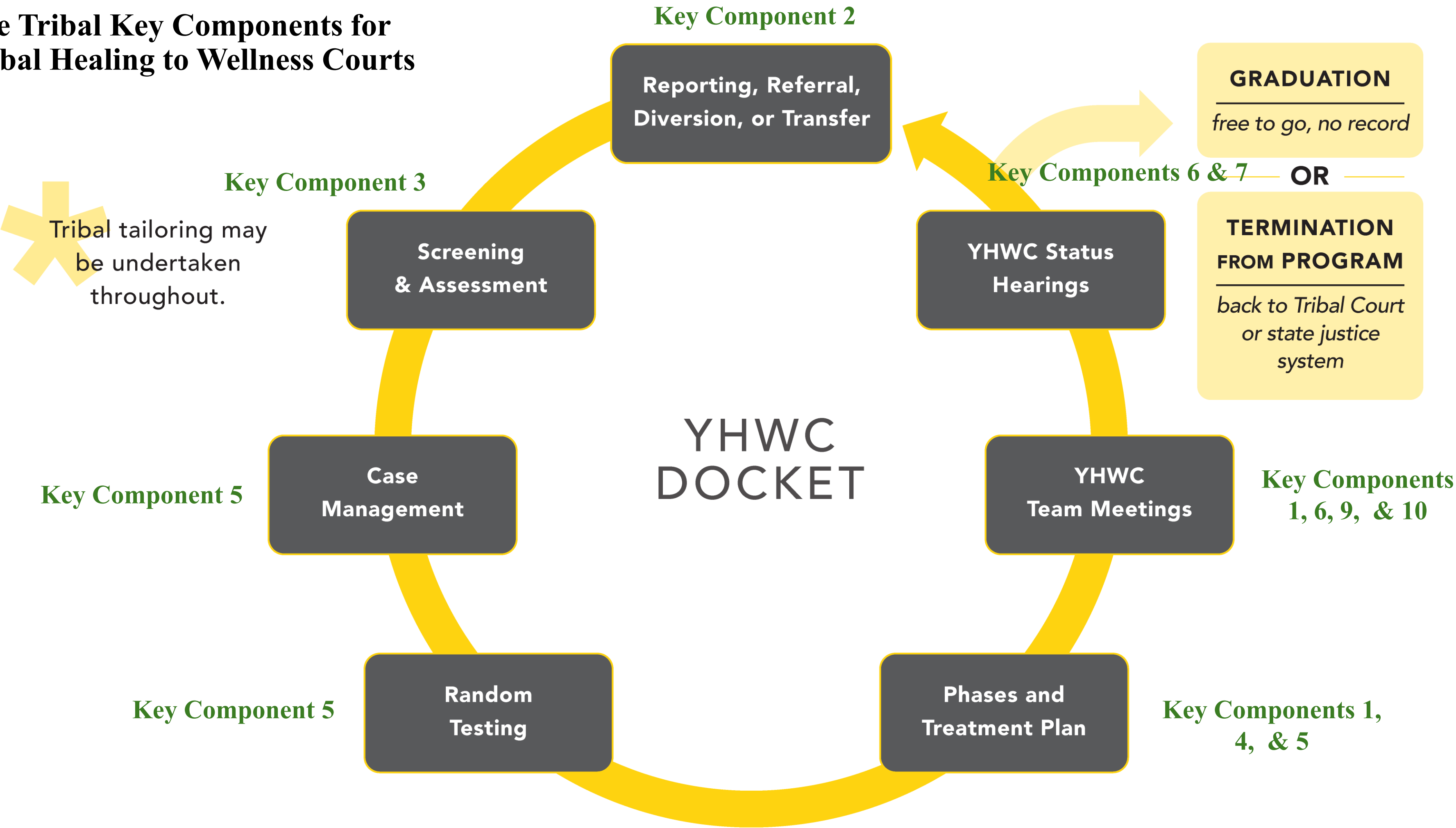
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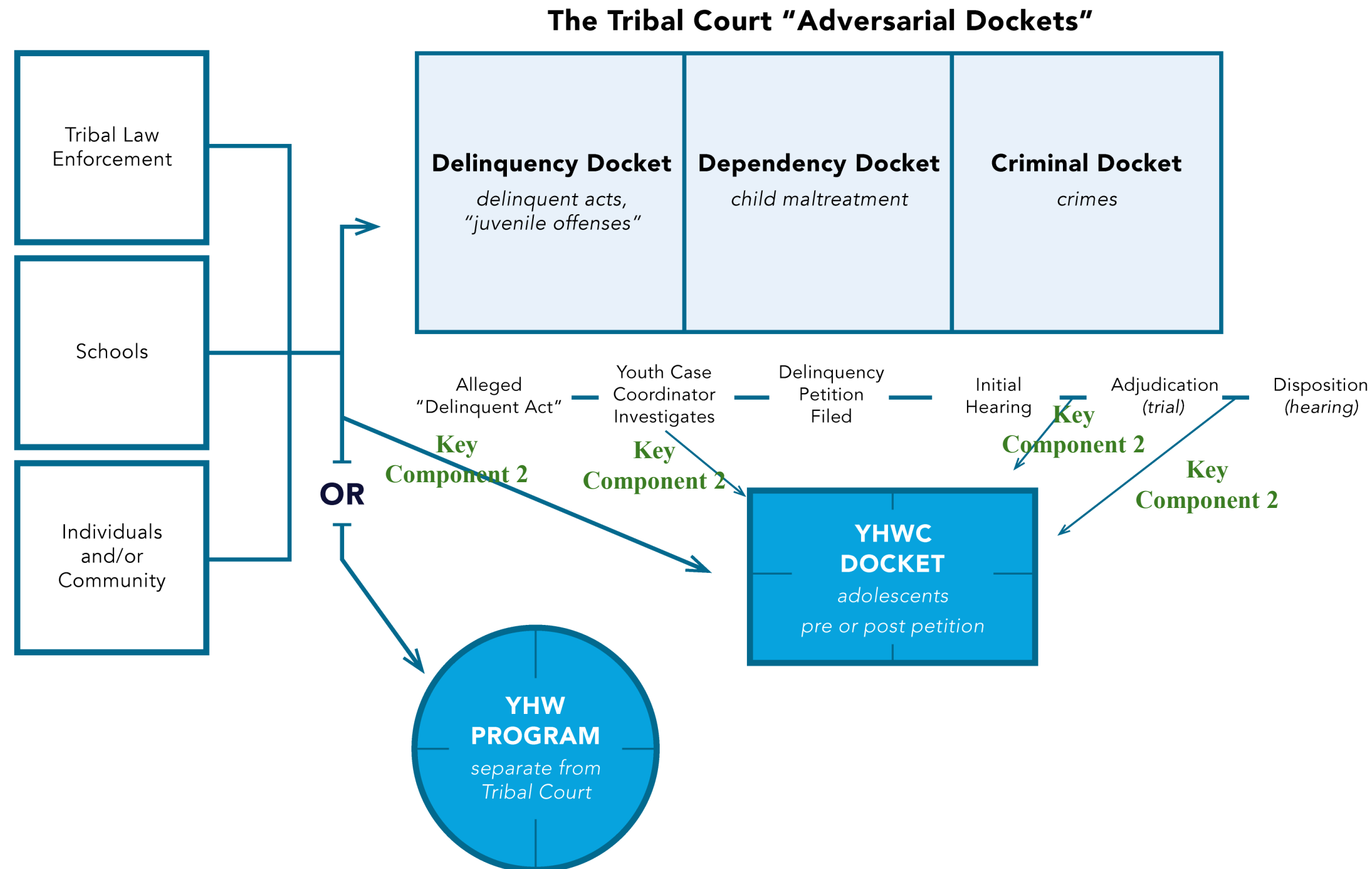
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The Tribal Key Components for Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts



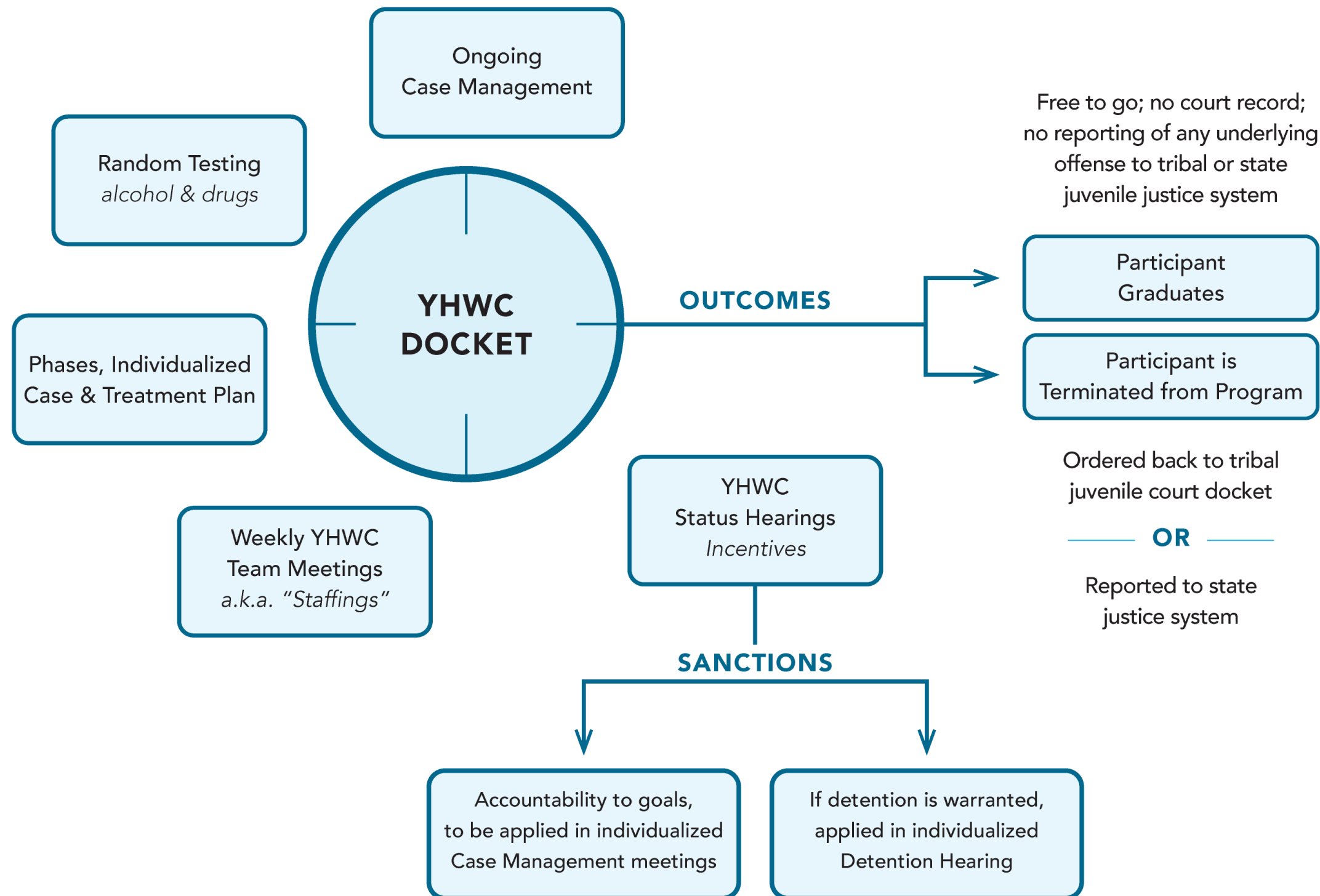
How Does a YHWC Fit into Your Existing Tribal Court System?



What Does the YHWC Process Look Like?

TRIBAL TAILORING

Restorative Practices
Elders & Mentors
Tribal History
Tribal Education
Tribal Activities
& Skills Building
Support Groups
*e.g. Red Road, White
Bison, Wellbriety*
Tribally Adapted
EBTs
*e.g. in counseling,
groups, & workbooks*



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The Population of Youth The YHWC Model was Designed to Serve

Key Component #3 – Screening and Eligibility:

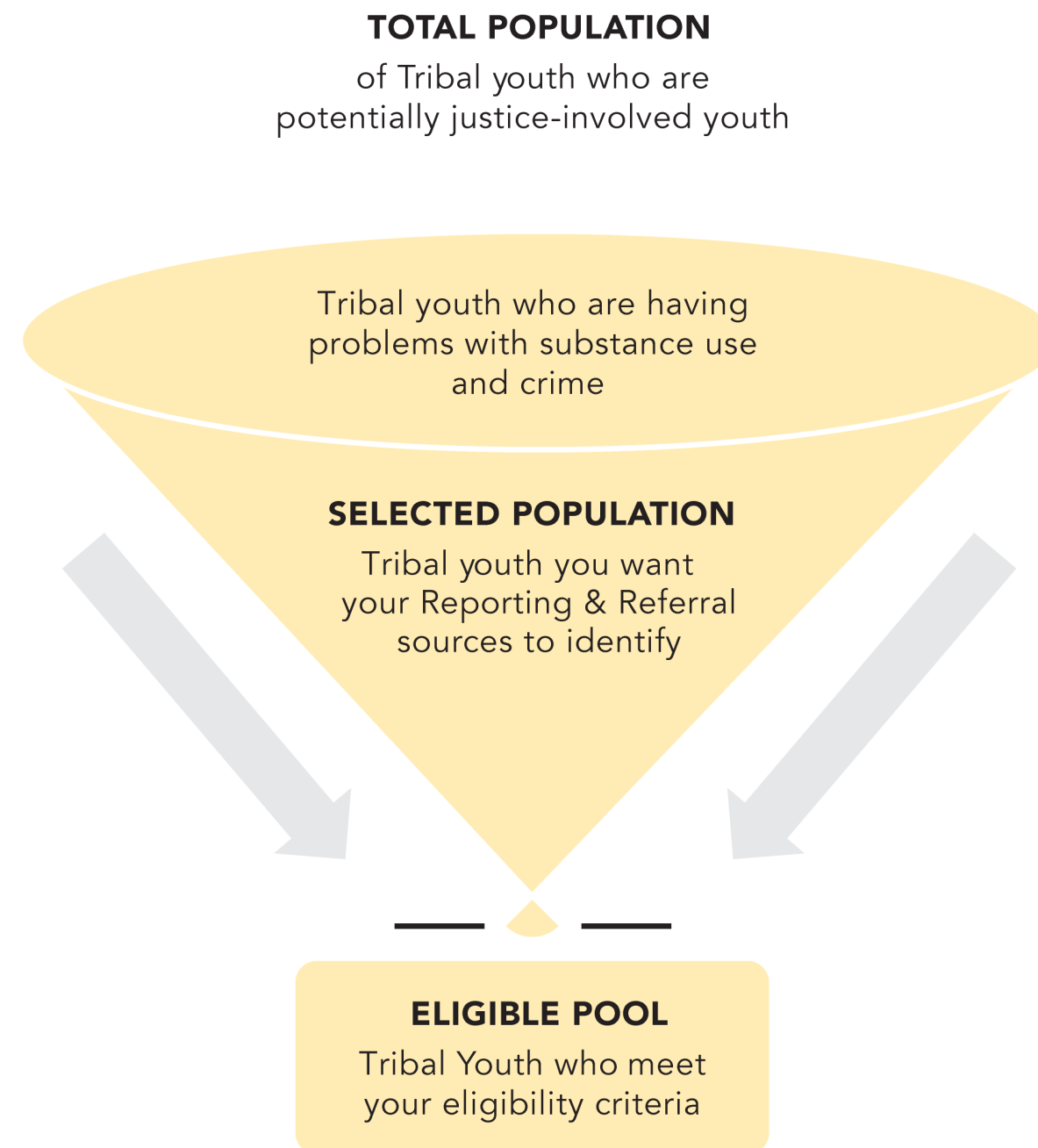
Eligible court-involved substance-abusing parents, guardians, juveniles, and adults are identified early through legal and clinical screening for eligibility and are promptly placed into the Tribal Healing to Wellness Court.

Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Best Practice:

Develop and adhere to eligibility criteria and conduct initial screening

1. What the eligibility criteria should include:
 - Youth with substance use [disorder]
 - Youth who are 14 years or older
 - Youth who are moderate to high-risk of re-offending
2. Assess participants for the risk of re-offending
3. Screen participants for substance use [disorder]
4. Divert participants who do not have substance use [disorder] and who have a low-risk of re-offending from Juvenile Drug Treatment Court process

The Eligibility Criteria That Research Shows Works



Eligibility criteria include the following:

1. Youth with substance use [disorder]*
2. Youth who are 14 years old or older
3. Youth who have a moderate to high risk of reoffending*
4. Not a Violent Offender**

*identified through valid assessment instruments

**CTAS P8 Requirement

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YHWC Tracks and Phases

	High Risk	Low Risk
High Need	Track 1 High-Risk/High-Need Supervision, case management, services for criminogenic needs, & SUD/MH treatment 14 months	Track 2 Low-Risk/High-Need SUD/MH treatment 13 months
Low Need	Track 3 High-Risk/Low-Need Supervision, case management, services for criminogenic needs 12 months	Track 4 (May not use CTAS Purpose Area 8 funds for this Track) Low-Risk/Low-Need Diversion from any court process 6-9 months

A multi-track model matches services and supervision levels to youth participants at different risk and need levels

“Criminogenic Risk/Need” – means the youth’s risk of committing new offenses/crimes and what they need to avoid it

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The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's Justice Center

How YHWC Hearings are Different

They are strength-based and use incentives

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Example: A “Rocket Docket”

YHWCs may use a court room protocol that uses a strength-based approach and incentives:

- a way of conducting business during YHWC Status Hearings and in related team meetings
- that prioritizes youth and families who have made progress since the last court session, so that they go first in the status hearing



100% negative drug tests
Perfect attendance in treatment
Perfect attendance in school

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Example: A “Rocket Docket” (cont.)

In the YHWC Status Hearing:

1. The YHWC Team lists the special Rocket Docket requirements that get a reward
2. The YHWC Judge asks the youth why they get to go first
3. This is followed by the Judge’s strength-seeking conversations
 - focusing on achievable goals identified during wellness planning
 - identifying a youth’s strengths, interest, hopes, and vision
4. The YHWC Case Manager responds to unwanted behavior in wellness management meetings, instead of having the YHWC Judge deliver sanctions in court



The Albuquerque Urban Native American Healing to Wellness Court

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Gift-giving is a cultural value and practice in AIAN communities
- “[c]ulturally, gift-giving is not simply about the gift but may be indicative of a deeper meaning of cultural connection and community”

– Native focus group

Using Incentives in a YHWC

Example of a Program-Wide Drawings (“Fishbowl”)

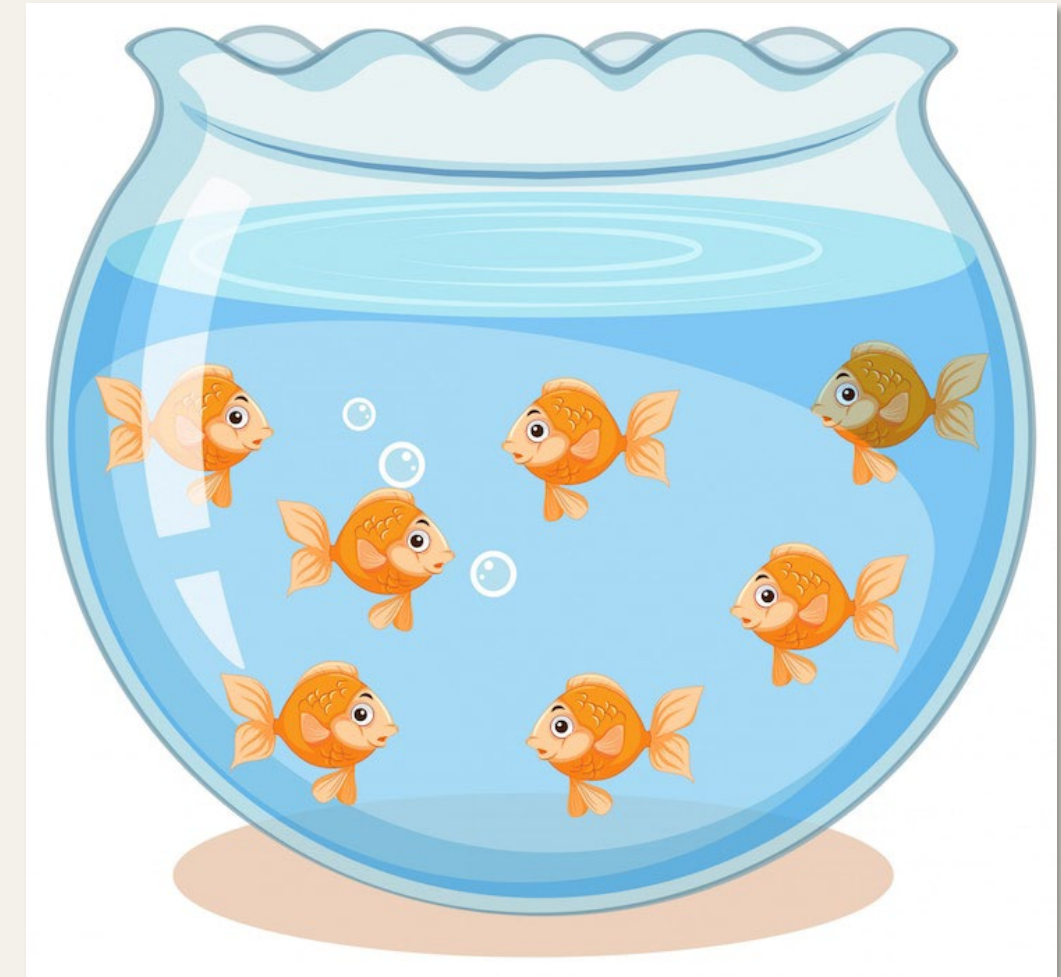
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Example: Program-Wide Drawings (Fishbowl)

A program-wide drawing is a raffle or a fishbowl where participants get tickets which are entered into a drawing for a prize:

- Every time a youth exhibits positive or encouraged behavior, a YHWC team or family member immediately nominates the youth
- The youth gets a ticket
- The ticket is entered into the drawing for a chance to win a small, medium, or large prize
- During a formal drawing in the YHWC Status Hearing



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Example: YHWC Prizes

Prizes should:

- Be designed to motivate youth (ask them)
- Reinforce school attendance, progress, and abstinence by respecting and recognizing a youth's successes and healthy choices
- Reinforce cultural engagement
- Incorporate the youth's Native language
- Enhance the daily living of youths attempting to reduce alcohol and/or drug use
- Support the self-care of youth
- Engage their families and the community



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What We Hope You Take Away From This Presentation...

1. Alcohol and Marijuana (THC), and likely, Polysubstances, are the top substance use trends among AIAN adolescents
2. The YHWC model is designed to be used with older adolescents who have substance use and who are court-involved
3. The types of interventions, supports, and services that Tribal youth get in a YHWC, depend on their assessed criminogenic risk and need levels (there are different “tracks” for youth with different needs in a YHWC)
4. The Youth Healing to Wellness Court model follows the Key Components of the Tribal Healing to Wellness Courts
5. The Tribal Key Components provide for a new type of therapeutic/cultural Tribal court docket that coordinates services and is trauma-informed and strength-based
6. YHWC Status Hearings process is different (non-adversarial, trauma-informed strength-based conversations between the judge and the youth; backed up with recognition of progress)
7. YHWC Judges and Teams give out incentives make service adjustments before sanctioning
8. Watch out for the CTAS NOFO, and consider applying for Purpose Area 8 to propose a Youth Healing to Wellness Court



Evaluation

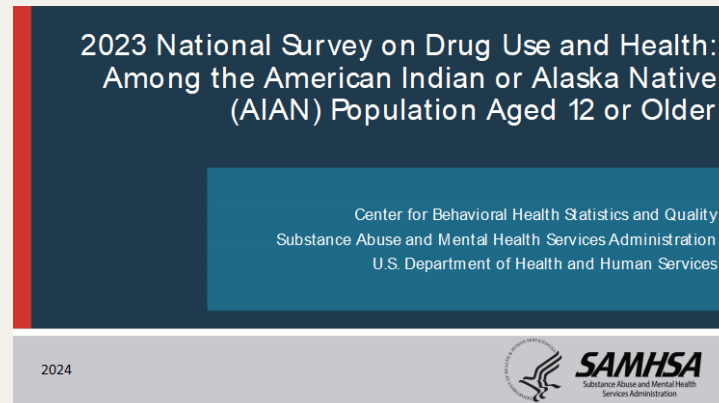
Please let us know what you thought of this training and how we can enhance your experience for the next one!



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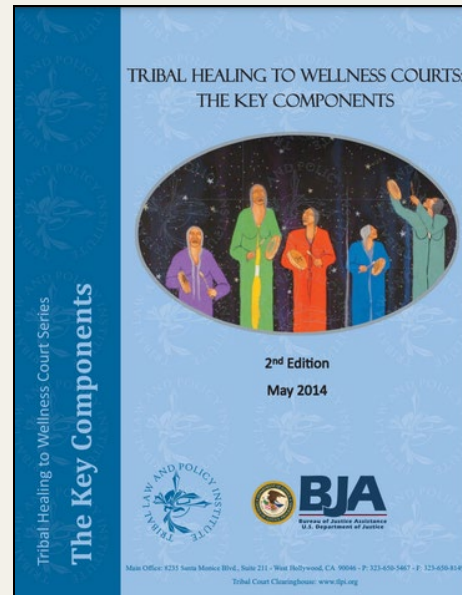


YHWC Resources



2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Among the American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) Population Aged 12 or Older

Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 2002–2022 (2024)



The Tribal Healing to Wellness Court Key Components (2014)

U.S. Department of Justice
FY25 Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation Notice of Funding Opportunity

<https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-bja-2025-172288>



The National Tribal Health Agenda (2016)



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THANK YOU!

Closing in a good way.

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