

Effectiveness of Critical Ongoing Resource Family Education Teen Edition (CORE-Teen): Support for Resource Parents of Teens who are American Indian

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This exploratory, qualitative study evaluated the effectiveness of an on-going training curriculum developed in 2016, CORE Teen, designed to support resource parents caring for older youth in the foster care system who are American Indian (AI; 12-20 years old). A pilot study of the curriculum was implemented with a Tribal Nation located in the southeast region of the United States. Two semi-structured focus groups (one group received CORE Teen training and the other did not) were conducted with a total of 12 resource parents to identify the differences in parenting practices of these two groups. To identify reoccurring patterns, a

***Acknowledgements:** This project was funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, under grant #90CO1132. The contents of this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau. We also thank all our Tribal partners and study participants from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians for their contributions and guidance.*

thematic content analysis produced ten themes in order of frequency: (1) desire for information; (2) lack of preparation; (3) normal teen behavior; (4) difficult transitions; (5) trauma; (6) mental health; (7) importance of kinship ties; (8) training outcomes; (9) training recommendations and (10) policy recommendations. The value of culture was present in multiple themes. Implications for policy and practice are offered.

The 2018 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS) identified 450,000 children in the foster care system in the United States (Children's Bureau, 2018). Of those 450,000, children and youth who are AI consist of over 2% of the child welfare system despite being less than 1% of the total population of children under the age of 18 (Child Trends, 2018). In contrast, children who are White consist of over 55% of the general population, but make up only 44 % of children placed in out-of-home-care settings (Child Trends, 2018). Nationwide, children who are AI are over-represented in foster care at a rate 2.7 times greater than their proportion in the general population (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2017). The 2018 AFCARS reported that youth ages 13 to 20 years comprise roughly 20% of the foster youth population awaiting permanency. The report also identified that teens who are AI are disproportionately emancipated from foster care upon turning 18 years of age. The literature demonstrates that older youth in the child welfare system need additional assistance in the transition from teen-erhood to young adulthood (Juvenile Law Center, 2020). Older youth face a different set of challenges than their younger counterparts and typically enter the foster system under different circumstances. For example, younger children commonly are removed from their families based on findings of neglect, parental substance use, physical abuse, parental incarceration, and housing instability (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). In comparison, older youth are more commonly removed due to behavioral problems, substance use, and parental rejection of youth who self-identify as LGBTQ+ and/or transgender (Rosenberg & Abbott, 2019).

Youth in the foster care system who are AI, in particular, are a severely understudied population in child welfare, despite their disproportionate representation in the foster care system (Austin, 2009). These children and youth have been historically marginalized; these inequities involved U.S. Government policy that permitted the forced removal of thousands of Indian children from their homes, families, and Tribal Nations and placement in boarding schools (U.S. Department of Indian Affairs, 1891) and federal incentives to adopt these children by Euro-American families through land acquisitions (Dawes Act, 1887). The governmental removal of children led to generations of American Indian children growing to adulthood without the benefit of biological parenting, support of families and Tribal Nations (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020). The intergenerational effects of historical trauma have been carried by the child welfare system into services that families who are AI receive (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020). Key legislation, namely the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) of 1978, was designed to protect children who are AI from unnecessary, preventable removal and hold child welfare workers accountable to the standard of active efforts in service provision to maximize the preservation and reunification of families (National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2020). Unfortunately, the stated regulations are not enforced consistently by child welfare agencies.

Foster parents, kinship caregivers, and adoptive parents (i.e., resource parents) working with youth who are AI face challenges to provide trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate, and culturally relevant care for the youth in their care. Nationally, youth who are AI face disproportionate rates of removals, lower rates of reunification, longer lengths of stay, and more placement moves as compared to their peers who are White (Children's Bureau, 2018). Subsequent traumas, including placement disruptions, lead to increased behavioral and mental health issues, poorer educational outcomes due to frequent changes in schools, a lower likelihood of reunifying with families, and increased difficulty in developing meaningful attachments to caregivers (Rutter & Sroufe, 2000) (National Foster Youth Institute, 2019).

Considering these factors, greater supports must be available to resource parents who provide care for adolescents who are AI at a critical time in their development.

Resource parents hold a pivotal role regarding the outcomes of children placed in their care. Therefore, they must be prepared with the most up-to-date, comprehensive training and educational programs to care for adolescents who have complex histories of trauma and diverse needs. Age, ethnicity, trauma history, and mental and spiritual health needs all should be considered when addressing best practices and skills for resource parents.

Well-equipped resource parents are lifelines that can provide stability, guidance, support, and hope to the adolescents living in their homes. In addition, resource parents need to comprehend the importance of tribal identity, history, clan, culture, and extended family members of the youth. As adolescence is typically a time for identity development exploration, it is critical that youth who are AI are given the necessary resources and choices to structure their identity as a member of the tribal community (Gonzalez-Santin & Perry, 2003). It is important youth have a trusted resource parent to enfranchise and support the youth in the foster care system to heal from the traumas of ambiguous loss that are prevalent from experiencing loss in a myriad of circumstances (Mitchell, 2018).

Maximizing the success of resource parents through evidence-based trainings consistent with the cultural values of the community is the first step to better serve older youth who are AI in the foster care system.

Present Study

Presently, supports available to resource parents with youth in their care who are AI/AN are limited. Therefore, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a culturally adapted version of CORE Teen, a new, ongoing training that focuses on specific developmental and trauma-informed education for resource parents caring for teens aged 12–20.

Background Information: CORE Teen Curriculum Intervention

The CORE (Critical Ongoing Resource family Education) is a state-of-the-art training program that includes culturally adapted content, designed to equip resource parents who are licensed through Tribal child welfare programs. CORE provides the skills necessary to meet the needs of older youth who are AI and have been exposed to trauma, resulting in suffering from moderate to serious emotional and behavior health challenges.

CORE guides families through a self-assessment process, provides classroom instruction to build an understanding of trauma, and supports skill development through the creation of right-time training tools. The self-assessment was administered three times: at baseline before participation in classroom training, immediately after classroom training, and 90 minutes after completion of classroom training. The classroom-based portion of the curriculum was composed of seven modules (12 hours of training content) and was taught in a small-group, face-to-face setting over a series of evenings and weekends by two child welfare professionals who are members of the community and were employed by the tribe's social services agency. There was a total of seven right time training modules that were available to intervention families, online, 24/7 that they could select from at their leisure to continue their learning after the classroom portion of the training was completed. Intervention families were required to participate in at least three right time trainings. Right time training was composed of videos, a discussion guide, and a family action plan.

The objective of CORE Teen is to provide resource parents with the knowledge, skills, and assets they need to effectively manage the behavioral challenges older youth exhibit. Resulting in an increased preparedness to welcome the youth into their homes, maintain placement stability, and commit to permanence, thus enhancing the youth's well-being. Key components of the CORE Teen curriculum include (1) introduction of the impact of trauma on youth in foster care;

(2) parenting youth who have experienced trauma; and (3) developing and sustaining a healthy and supportive relationship with the youth. Furthermore, the curriculum emphasizes prioritizing the nourishment of the youth's cultural/racial/ethnic needs, sexual orientation/gender identity; understanding and managing youth challenging behaviors; and a new suitcase of parenting knowledge and skills (Spaulding For Children, 2020). The lack of teen and culturally specific, ongoing support for resource parents who are AI paved the way for CORE Teen's development and subsequent cultural adaptations. CORE Teen is a free, open-access, in-service foster parent training curriculum designed to prepare resource parent to have teens in their home. The training also prepares their readiness for 24/7 management of difficult situations they may encounter after youth are placed in their homes.

Background Information: The Tribal Community That Implemented the CORE Teen Intervention

This participating tribe oversees approximately 60 child welfare cases annually, approximately one quarter of these cases involve youth between the ages of 12 and 20. The tribe oversees approximately 50 licensed foster parents and 16 unlicensed relative caregivers who provide care for these children. Twenty-seven total caregivers completed the CORE Teen training and twenty-one caregivers served as comparison group participants and received services as usual (Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting pre-service training) (MAPP, 2014). All caregivers were offered the opportunity to participate in CORE Teen. The comparison group was constructed from caregivers who self-selected out of the intervention.

Methodology

The goal of the study was to recruit half of the participants to participate in one of two focus groups from the intervention and comparison

groups (10 participants per focus group). Focus groups were scheduled approximately six months after participants completed classroom training. This qualitative study provides an analysis of data collected from two focus groups conducted with foster, kin, and adoptive caregivers licensed to parent teens who are AI in one Tribal community located in the Southeast region of the United States. In an effort to better understand the impact of CORE Teen on resource families, a thematic content analysis was conducted on the reoccurring and emerging themes from both focus groups.

Sample

The data collected for the study were gathered from a sample of 12 caregivers who were licensed to provide foster care in one tribal community. A total of six caregivers have received CORE Teen training, while the youth were in their care (intervention) and six caregivers who were parenting teens did not receive the training (comparison). Focus group membership was assigned based on whether the caregivers received the CORE Teen training. Descriptive information for the caregivers and the teens placed in their homes are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of resource parents from the focus groups (N = 12)

		Intervention	Comparison
Gender	Male	1	3
	Female	5	3
Race	American Indian and Alaskan Native	4	4
	African American	0	0
	Caucasian/White	2	2
	Hispanic	0	0

Table 1. Demographics of resource parents from the focus groups (N = 12) (continued)

		Intervention	Comparison
Number of teens in home	0	1	1
	1	4	1
	2	1	0
	3	0	4
	4	0	0
Age of teen in home	12	1	1
	13	0	0
	14	0	1
	15	2	1
	16	2	6
	17+	0	2
Length of stay in home	<1 year	3	1
	1 year to 2 years	2	2
	2 years to 3 years	1	2
	3 years to 4 years	0	0
	4 years to 5 years	0	1
	Over 5 years	0	0
Teen diagnosed with physical health issue	Unsure	0	0
	Yes	5	5
	No	1	1
Teen diagnosed with mental health issue	Unsure	0	0
	Yes	3	4
	No	3	2
Teen stayed in same school	Yes	2	3
	No	3	3
Training attended	CORE Teen	6	0
	PRIDE	0	0

Table 1. Demographics of resource parents from the focus groups (N = 12) (continued)

		Intervention	Comparison
	MAPP	0	6
	Other	0	0
Had to reduce work hours	Yes	2	0
	No	3	6

Procedures

Study participants were recruited through flyers posted in the tribal children’s services office and through the word of mouth via tribal case-workers. Participants received a \$25 gift card for compensation of their time, dinner, and child care during the focus groups to ensure a wider range of families would be able to participate. The two focus groups that were conducted lasted approximately 90 minutes each. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Professional transcriptions from each focus group were systematically analyzed with DeDoose, a secure web-based platform for organizing, analyzing, and visualizing qualitative data (Day et al., 2018). This study was approved by a tribal IRB, the University human subjects research office, and tribal council.

Analysis

The qualitative data from the focus groups was coded for themes using the phenomenological analytic process as defined by Moustakas (1994). The primary focus of phenomenological analysis is to capture the essence of the meaning of the experience as described by the participants through a process of observing and describing the phenomena being studied (Giorgi, 2009). These themes and quotes identified in both the control and intervention group were cross analyzed to identify similarities, differences, and suggestions for future practice and

potential trainings. Each theme identified was accompanied by a quote provided during the focus group interviews to provide a concrete example of how the theme is applicable to the resource families experiences with their level of ongoing training and support.

Results

In response to the focus group conversations, the 12 resource parent participants identified several major themes that characterize the experiences they have faced caring for older teens and offered suggestions for policy and practice to alleviate challenges for future resource families. Each of the ten major themes are depicted in Table 2 and discussed below.

Theme 1: Desire for Information

A large difference was observed regarding instances of a desire for more information between intervention and control groups. The control group participants asked for additional information on how to parent teens at six times the rate of the intervention group. The vast majority of training desired pertained to topics currently available in CORE Teen, such as information on how to navigate the teen's sexual orientation and gender identity, or skills to support culturally specific needs. Topics recommended for inclusion are training on social media and monitoring its use, impact of substance exposure on teens born drug affected, and more information on how to parent teens who were pregnant and parenting.

Theme 2: Lack of Preparation

There were ten times as many coded instances around lack of preparation for the control group than the intervention group. The

intervention group viewed lack of preparation as not a gap in training, but as a lack of system resources to support parenting. The control group expressed that they were “totally unprepared” to care for their teen as a resource parent. The only knowledge they referenced was experience gained throughout life and the journey of caring for their teen.

Theme 3: Normal Teen Behavior

While both the intervention and control groups talked about teen behavior, the control group characterized teen behavior as disordered or in the context of behavioral issues. In contrast, the intervention group contextualized teen behavior as within a normal range of age-appropriate expected behavior. Control group resource parents expressed a need for resources to help manage their teens’ emotions—particularly the emotions surrounding their biological parents. The intervention group articulated a developmentally informed understanding of their teens’ behaviors, which observably seemed to shift their attitude and response.

Theme 4: Difficult Transitions

Ten instances of difficult transitions were discussed in the transcripts. The intervention group described transitioning teens in and out of their homes, between birth parents, group homes, and multiple placements slightly more than the control group. Regardless of whether or not the resource parents received CORE Teen training, difficult transitions were cited as a natural, expected challenge that all youth in the foster care system face. Well-equipped, trained resource parents in the intervention group demonstrated a greater capacity to facilitate these transitions to ease the experience for their teens.

Theme 5: Trauma

More than six times as many parents in the control group recognized and explicitly discussed trauma. In this case, the control group talked

about the lack of training and support structures available to address trauma (including intergenerational, historical, and current day social traumas). Both the control and intervention groups discussed the impact of multiple traumas on the youth in their care and the traumas specific to American Indian communities.

Theme 6: Mental Health

Mental health was often discussed alongside trauma as an antecedent or explanatory factor for teenage behavior. Calling out mental health issues of children occurred much more infrequently than in the other pilot sites.

Theme 7: Importance of Kinship Ties

Kinship ties were explicating called out as important and a way to decrease the trauma associated with placement and promoted relationship development between child and caregiver more quickly. The intervention group discussed the importance of maintaining and nurturing kinship relationships more-so than the control group.

Theme 8: Training Outcomes

Unique to the intervention group included information on the most salient lessons learned and applied from attending the CORE Teen curriculum. Salient lessons that were mentioned included acknowledgment of AI intergenerational and historical trauma, adopting trauma-informed approaches to discipline and forming meaningful bonds with youth in care, and preparation for difficult transitions in the teen's life.

Theme 9: Training Recommendations

Training recommendations included both new additions for content and recommendations to improve training delivery (favoring face to

Table 2: Intervention vs. Comparison Group Strength of Theme Assessment

Theme	Intervention (# Coded)	Comparison (# Coded)	Example Quotes
Desire for Information	4	26	"I don't remember [any specific skill set outlined or red flags to look for] being specifically tailored toward teen issues or anything like that."
			"In the curriculum that you all have been introduced to, did they have a discussion with you about trauma, historical trauma, and how to work specifically with new children?' 'No."
Lack of Preparation	2	21	"So basically, your training was life experience?' 'Yeah, totally unprepared. Totally unprepared."
			"[CORE Teen] prepared me that everybody has feelings [...] I might not agree, but [youth] still has feelings, and I have to take that into consideration."
Normal Teen Behavior	v	7	"...as they have hit their teenage years, DNAs kicked in [...] the molecular level grounding of their DNA for behavior or tendencies, or dispositions to different things."
			"...we haven't had any trainings per say other than MAPP, so maybe something on how to handle the teens behavior and biological parents [...] on how to handle their emotions. Basically the only training we've had is to keep doing our job and our schooling."

Table 2: Intervention vs. Comparison Group Strength of Theme Assessment (continued)

Theme	Intervention (# Coded)	Comparison (# Coded)	Example Quotes
<p>“When [youth] thinks about [biological mother] I think it’s when he gets really mad, but now that he’s had visits with mom, [...] I guess him seeing her and the way she treated him [...] he’s really hostile and really upset. I taught him, ‘that’s normal. [...] if you have to go outside and scream. [...] Just get it out, don’t let it build up inside cause it’s gonna hurt you or you do something to hurt yourself.”</p>	6	4	<p>“... [youth] is mad at mom and he comes home and he like has the attitude, you know, to me and then it’s like just hateful...”</p>
<p>Difficult Transitions</p>			<p>“... this weakened sense of identity and understanding within the tribal community [...] is directly related to generational, historic trauma. And people are so far removed from that. If the community was grounded traditionally and culturally across the board [...] like if the language was there, if our identity was there, connection with clan was there, if all this stuff was brought back up, you’d never have domestic violence issues. You’d never have substance abuse. You’d never have crazy insane nightmare stuff happening to your kids, all that stuff is gonna be regulated.”</p>

Table 2: Intervention vs. Comparison Group Strength of Theme Assessment (continued)

Theme	Intervention (# Coded)	Comparison (# Coded)	Example Quotes
Trauma	1	6	<p>"My kid was parentified, and I couldn't guide her anywhere. She's so used to being a parent, being independent...she wasn't used to someone leading her. She just couldn't do it. I couldn't guide her, I couldn't, I couldn't. That was frustrating for someone [like me] that is a control freak...My biggest frustration, why will you not let me help you?"</p>
Mental Health	2	3	<p>"... it would have been valuable to us, it would have been eye opening, I think, for us to kind of see that on the front end versus seeing things manifesting in the house and being like 'what the hell is, like where's this coming from?' And then finding out, oh well this was going on or that was going on but then getting even deeper in that, looking back [...] things the community's faced for a long time and issues within the community that kind of shape those behaviors."</p>
Importance of Kinship Ties	3	0	<p>"I just sit down and talk to them, and just, I guess us understanding each other. Um, I've got these two, I guess it's more of kinship placement because I'm related to their dad and by them understanding that 'hey, I'm related to this person, and she's not going to be bad.' That made it a little bit easier on them to be in my house."</p>
Training Outcomes	9	0	<p>"The transgender training was really good to me. [Previous trainings] never discussed that. I'm glad you have that in the training."</p>

Table 2: Intervention vs. Comparison Group Strength of Theme Assessment (continued)

Theme	Intervention (# Coded)	Comparison (# Coded)	Example Quotes
Training Recommendations	10	9	<p>“After seeing and talking to the other foster parents, watching the videos, it gave me more of an understanding and self-discovery too. Like oh, that is why this happens! I could see my [self-assessment] answers changing and it was being more calm than just being ‘this is what I’m gonna say and you’re going to have to do it’”</p> <p>“How [foster teen] feels and expresses it in so many different ways. Being able to recognize it more and being a little bit more patient with it.”</p>
Policy Recommendations	0	2	<p>“Understanding the two different teenagers compared to my other [biological] kids and trying to get them to open up to me.”</p> <p>“... the area that I would like more info on is the transgender and [identities] that they could place themselves in.”</p> <p>“I’ve asked my social workers too [...] ‘can you find out what clan my kids are?’ and they don’t know but, our social workers are mostly white, so they don’t understand the significance of how clan, how important it is to us...”</p> <p>“... that would be easy because it’s hard once you have all these kids with doctor’s appointments and they’re sick [...] that’s what [co-foster parent] and I were working on, trying to help get foster parents some kind of medical, foster care leave for kids that have all of these appointments.”</p>

face over online training opportunities, obtaining administrative leave from work to participate in trainings, incentivizing parent participation in the training (meals, child care, stickers for reading out loud, and other prizes for active engagement).

Theme 10: Policy Recommendations

Unique to the control group were two non-training related policy recommendations to improve the fostering parenting experience. This included requiring documentation that teens are introduced to and/or have ongoing involvement with their culture, and getting foster parents medical leave to care for youth with extensive medical and mental health needs.

Discussion

The study brought forth emerging themes to guide future policy and practice, while reiterating characteristics of successful resource parents caring for teens who are AI that are widely cited and practiced (Day et al., 2018). Themes cited include strong cultural identity and sensitivity of resource parents, understanding of history, law and policy, exhibits patience, and importance of kinship ties and family as a resource. Several studies highlight the importance of fostering and nurturing strong cultural identity with teens who are AI during their journey in the foster care system and the impact it has on their development and identity (Kulis, Ayers & Baker 2016) (Pember, 2016). Both the intervention and control groups indicated this as a critical role of resource parents they would like more informational material on the topic. Similarly, kin and family of the teen as a resource during difficult transitions is also a well-supported practice to ease the transitions and hardships which accompany the foster care system (Cromer et al., 2018) (Sindelar & Igancio, 2004). The intervention group in particular explicitly mentioned numerous times the importance of kinship ties as a crucial part

of caring for teens who are AI. Lastly, patience is cited as a valuable aspect of resource parents in both previous literature and the current study (Brown et al., 2014) (Cross, Simmons & Earle, 2000). Prior literature describes an attribute of patient caregivers as the ability to focus on long term goals and outcomes rather than be reactive to immediate situations, especially in relation to the emotions of a child who has experienced trauma and/or is in the process of healing (Day et al., 2018).

Some new themes that have not been discussed in previous literature surfaced during the focus group conversations. These include a need for greater on-going supports for resource parents to navigate emerging issues; policy implications to support youth with disabilities who are AI and increased information and tools to assist them in being able to differentiate typical teen behaviors from behaviors associated with their teen's distinctive lived experiences that resulted in foster care placement.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Racial disparities between child welfare workers and their clients were discussed among the control group. Significant barriers in services and support were indicated in the delivery of services. The control group articulated white child welfare workers were unable to “understand the significance” of certain aspects of their identity, such as the importance of clan for AI communities. The racial and cultural gap the control group shared reflects a larger issue of who is holding child welfare agencies and workers accountable to uphold standards by the Indian Child Welfare Act to best serve youth and families who are AI. This suggests that greater efforts towards providing updated policy briefings and continuing education for child welfare workers must be mandatory. National reports and guidelines should be disseminated and thoroughly discussed with agency staff to clarify and reiterate the importance of providing the upmost standards of culturally relevant services (Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2016). Additional efforts should also be made by colleges and universities to recruit and retain tribal citizens

in social work programs to ensure the field has a supply of culturally sensitive and culturally competent workers that can meet the training and direct practice needs of tribal communities located both on and off reservation. A great strength of the current study was the inclusion of child welfare professionals who were tribal members/descents to develop the curriculum, train the curriculum, and evaluate the curriculum; the findings of this study is likely to have been impacted by the inclusion of these stakeholders. Continued and collaborated efforts from individual states and the federal government are needed to explore implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) on the national level (Kelly, 2016) With robust research to better inform how ICWA compliance relates to positive outcomes for families and youth who are AI, the evidence for effective programs and practices continues to grow (Summers, Deserly & Yost, 2017). The present study supplements the evidence base by offering first-hand insight into the resource parents that are receiving such services to inform policy and practice priorities.

This study also demonstrates CORE Teen as an effective resource for foster and adoptive parents caring for teens. Especially the components of culturally informed care for resources parents caring for diverse youth populations, as the current literature demonstrates a need for culturally focused training and legislation (Stafanson, 2019). The interviews revealed resource parents in the intervention group indicated a significant increase in their feelings of self-efficacy, reported feeling greater preparation to care for teens, and an increased understanding of trauma and its impact on these teens. In addition to engagement with pre-service training, there is a need for ongoing training for parents post licensure. Specifically, CORE Teen has the potential to aid resource parents in their continual journey of being attentive and inventive caregivers.

The intervention group shared the training provided concrete resources and parenting skills to aid in better understanding teen behaviors and in responding more effectively to undesirable behaviors. Resource parents that are able to apply a historical trauma framework

to their understanding of child development and mental health are best equipped to respond with patience (Campbell & Evans-Campbell, 2011). CORE Teen offered two modules in the classroom training that promoted patience, including trauma informed parenting part 1 and 2 and a third module dedicated to understanding and managing youth challenging behaviors. The control group had observably less patience with or understanding of behavioral challenges with the foster teens in their homes. They often were unable to relate challenging teen behaviors to the trauma or mental health experiences or needs of the teens. In several instances, resource parents in the control group discussed moving challenging teens out of their homes more quickly. Parents in the control group frequently discussed feeling ill-equipped due to having less than adequate information to provide a suitable home for teens with more complex mental and or behavioral issues.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The current study provides a first look at the impact of cultural adaptations of a national foster parent training curriculum for a Tribal nation. This study was based on focus group interviews with 12 participants who provided insight of their experiences preparing for and parenting teens who are AI. Although this sample size was small, this formative work can inform next steps for refining the CORE Teen curriculum for use with future caregivers. Additional research is needed to assess the long-term impact of the curriculum on placement stability, permanency, and well-being of youth who have been placed in resource parent homes who participated in the CORE Teen curriculum. Current results may be strengthened through the implementation of CORE Teen in other tribal communities across the United States. It is important to note that Tribal customs and practices differ significantly from tribe to tribe and that additional curricular adaptations would be needed to ensure CORE Teen remains relevant for all tribes who might be interested in utilizing the training in their respective communities.

Conclusion

Greater efforts are required to provide placement stability and permanency for older youth in the foster care system who are AI. The outcomes for youth who are AI not only affect them as individuals, but also impact the preservation and success of their Tribal communities. An emphasis on these youth in the child welfare system is a focus in this study due to the historical and generational implications for Native families impacted by the child welfare system. The Indian Child Welfare Act aims to not only protect children who are AI from unnecessary, preventable removal, but also holds child welfare workers accountable in their active efforts of preserving and reunifying families—although not always successful. Thus, the CORE Teen curriculum provides an opportunity to support tribal communities in making active efforts for sustainability of the tribe. Resource parents caring for youth who are AI increase the ability for them to remain in family-based settings with their tribal community. These youth historically are overrepresented in congregate care placements—most of which are not operated in Tribal communities (NICWA, 2017). Preparing foster parents who are AI to care for youth who are AI allows these youth to maintain connections to their Tribal communities. In this way, they can have an opportunity to learn about their culture and can be better prepared to take leadership roles to support the continuity of the Tribe into the future.

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