

**Adult Tribal Healing
to Wellness Courts
Webinar Series**

January 6-9, 2026

www.WellnessCourts.org
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RIGHT PATH, RIGHT CARE: STRENGTHENING REFERRALS FOR NATIVE CLIENTS WITH DIGNITY & PRECISION

*Bridging Judicial Systems and
Behavioral Health to Protect Our
People*

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DISCLAIMER

This project was supported by Grant No. 15PBJA-23-GK-05390-DGCT awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). BJA is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.





TRIBAL LAW AND POLICY INSTITUTE

A Native American operated non-profit:

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.



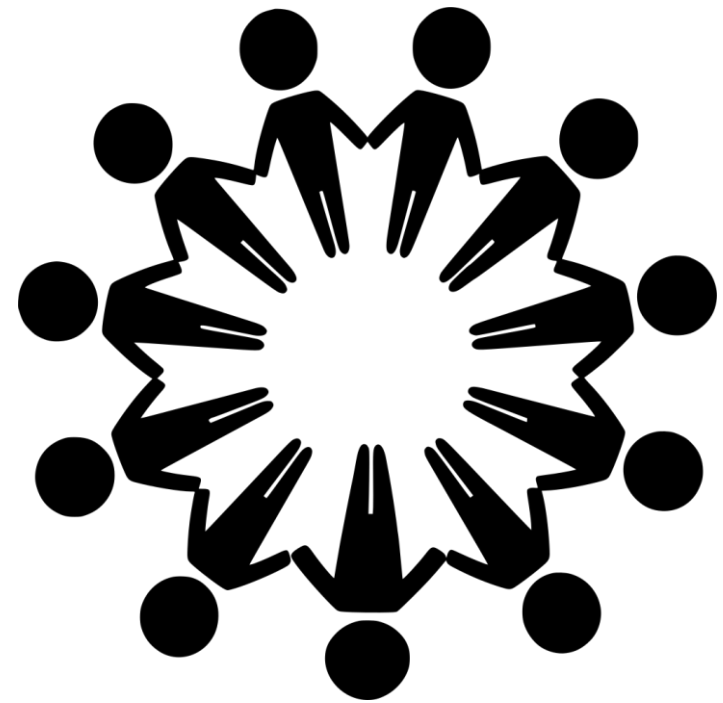
► LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify referral gaps that lead to harm for Native clients.
- Understand role boundaries between courts, clinicians, and Tribal programs.
- Apply a culturally grounded referral model to improve outcomes.





▶ **“WHEN SYSTEMS ALIGN, LIVES ARE SAVED.”**



► THE STORY BEHIND THE SILENCE

- Native clients were referred to Arizona substance misuse programs without proper clinical assessment.
- Some were severely mentally ill (SMI) and needed higher-level care.
- These inappropriate placements led to clients going missing or getting caught in Medicaid fraud schemes.
- This is not about blame—it's about finding solutions.



► CLARIFYING THE CHALLENGE

- The system often asks social workers to make referrals they are not clinically equipped for.
- Behavioral health departments (Tribal/non-Tribal) are often bypassed.
- This gap increases risk and breaks continuity of care.



REAL CONSEQUENCES

- Clients misdiagnosed or placed in wrong level of care.
- Many leave programs Against Medical Advice (AMA).
- Vulnerability to homelessness or exploitation.



▶ HONORING ROLES – A TEAM APPROACH

Role

Judge

Judicial Social Worker

Behavior Health Dept

Reentry Programs

Responsibility

Accountability & Court Orders

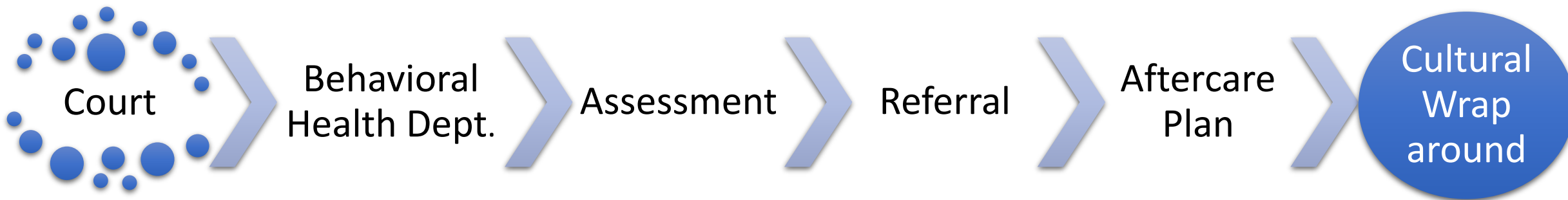
Support, Not Clinical Assessment

Diagnosis, Treatment Planning

Cultural Integration & Aftercare



▶ THE "RIGHT PATH" REFERRAL FLOW





POSITIVE SOLUTION – “STAY IN YOUR LANE” PROTOCOL

- Respect clinical boundaries.
- Courts refer to Behavioral Health (BH), not to programs directly.
- Establish Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with Indian Health Services (IHS)/638 and local BH departments.
- Hold joint staffing or pre-referral case meetings.





By strengthening coordinated referrals with Tribal Behavioral Health, it is possible to significantly reduce AMA discharges and improve client retention.

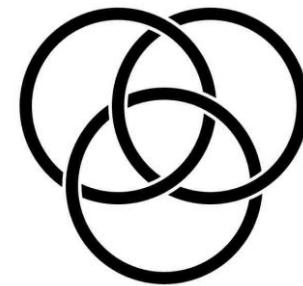
Culturally responsive, integrated approaches keep clients engaged longer and improve outcomes.





CULTURAL CARE AS A SAFETY NET

- Clinical treatment and traditional care are both needed.
- Wrap programs with ceremony, mentorship, and cultural healing.
- Culture is prevention—but treatment must still be clinically guided.





CALL TO ACTION

LET'S COMMIT TO THESE 3 THINGS:

- Refer with care — involve BH in all clinical decisions.
- Respect Tribal programs — do not bypass them.
- Protect lives through alignment, not assumptions.



RESOURCES

Tribal Law & Policy Institute Resources: Tribal Healing to Wellness Court Publication Series





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THANK YOU!

