

Best Practices for Working with American Indian/Alaska Native Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES) 2015 Data



American Indian and
Alaska Native

family and child experiences survey



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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide researchers seeking access to the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey 2015 (AI/AN FACES 2015) data with an understanding of best practices for use of these data. This document provides a brief background about AI/AN FACES 2015 and the importance of these data, as well as a description of the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup and its role in guiding the study. The document then lists Best Practices for Working with AI/AN FACES 2015 data and the rationale for each best practice. The Best Practices were identified by the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup and were informed by the study agreements with the 21 participating federally recognized AI/AN communities¹ participating in the study, Workgroup members' experiences, and the literature on best practices for research with AI/AN communities more broadly. This document concludes with a set of readings that researchers seeking more information about the context of research with AI/AN communities may find useful. Acknowledgement of the Principal Investigator's intent to follow the Best Practices is required as part of the AI/AN FACES 2015 restricted data use application (please see the AI/AN FACES 2015 [Data Application Protocol](#) for additional instructions). In addition, Principal Investigators should ensure all research team members listed on the AI/AN FACES 2015 data application (current and future) have read and are familiar with these Best Practices as well as the two publically available required readings (marked with a "+" see [page 9](#)) prior to commencing any work with these data.

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¹ In this document, we use the terms AI/AN, tribal, tribe, and Native to refer inclusively to the broad and diverse groups of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, villages, communities, corporations, and populations in the United States, acknowledging that each tribe, village, community, corporation, and population is unique from others with respect to language, culture, history, geography, political and/or legal structure or status, and contemporary context.

Background

Planning for AI/AN FACES 2015 began in 2013, with the goal of providing much needed information about the children and families served by Region XI Head Start, which are programs operated by federally recognized AI/AN tribes. Region XI Head Start programs serve both AI/AN and non-AI/AN children and families in the communities in which they operate. Since 1997, the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) has been a regular source of nationally representative data on Head Start programs, centers, classrooms, children and families in Regions I through X, the 10 geographically based Head Start regions nationwide. Historically, Region XI Head Start programs have not been included in FACES due to the intensive planning required to successfully carry out the study in partnership with tribal Head Start programs and communities. While both the Program Information Report (PIR) and the [Head Start Health Managers Survey](#) include national data for Region XI Head Start, neither provide the kind of national data that AI/AN FACES 2015 provides. Specifically, neither the PIR nor the Head Start Health Managers Survey include direct reports from teachers or parents, nor direct assessments of children's development. In 2015, a new study—the American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (AI/AN FACES 2015)—focused on Region XI for the first time. AI/AN FACES 2015 represents an important new source of national data for Region XI Head Start and promises to expand our understanding of the resources and needs of its programs, children, and families.

The AI/AN FACES Workgroup

AI/AN FACES 2015 was designed, implemented, and its findings disseminated with guidance from the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup. The AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup was comprised of tribal Head Start leaders, researchers, and federal officials at ACF in the Office of Head Start and the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. Relying on members' collective knowledge, and input from tribal leaders and tribal Head Start program directors nationally, the Workgroup sought to ensure that AI/AN

FACES 2015 was designed with the needs of AI/AN Head Start programs, children, families, and communities at the forefront. Additionally, the Workgroup sought to ensure that the study adhered to best practices for research with AI/AN communities. Chapter I of the AI/AN FACES 2015 [User's Manual](#) provides additional detailed information about the composition of the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup and its activities.

Best Practices for Working with AI/AN FACES 2015 Data

By seeking access to the AI/AN FACES 2015 data, you are fulfilling the Workgroup's vision that these data be analyzed and disseminated broadly. As you are likely aware, research literature is sparse on early childhood development in AI/AN communities, and there is almost no published literature on the experiences of children and families served by Region XI Head Start. Your analysis and dissemination of AI/AN FACES 2015 data therefore promises to fill a major gap in the literature, and more importantly, to assist in providing Region XI Head Start programs, children, families, and communities with information that can be used in efforts to best meet the needs of the children and families they serve. While access to AI/AN FACES 2015 data is welcomed and encouraged, it is an important responsibility that researchers seeking access understand and are prepared to follow what the Workgroup has determined to be best practices for research involving these AI/AN data.

AI/AN FACES 2015 Best Practice 1: The perspectives of both researchers and AI/AN community partners should be included when conducting research using AI/AN FACES 2015 data. While the principal investigator seeking access to AI/AN FACES data is required to demonstrate that s/he and/or her/his research team has relevant tribal experience (see p. 7 of the [Data Application Protocol](#)), researchers are encouraged to also consider working with an AI/AN community partner, particularly one with Region XI Head Start program experience, as they work with AI/AN FACES 2015 data.

Rationale: Research with AI/AN communities is strengthened when the perspectives of both researchers and community partners are included. An AI/AN community partner who has first-

hand experience working with AI/AN children and families (especially those served by Head Start) can help researchers align their analyses with AI/AN community priorities and help ground interpretations of findings meaningfully within an AI/AN Head Start or tribal early childhood community context. Community partners can include tribal members or individuals who work in tribal early childhood settings. In doing so, the chances are maximized that analyses of and findings from AI/AN FACES 2015 data will be useful in efforts to improve services and outcomes for Region XI Head Start children and families. Researchers should consider the value added by this approach and the possibilities for involvement of an individual or group of individuals who can bring an AI/AN Head Start and/or tribal early childhood community perspective to bear on the conceptualization of data analyses, findings, and dissemination.

AI/AN FACES 2015 Best Practice 2: Findings based on AI/AN FACES 2015 data should not be used to make statements about *all* AI/AN children or families, nor *all* AI/AN children and families in Head Start.

Rationale: The AI/AN FACES 2015 study is representative of all children and families served by Region XI Head Start programs. Accordingly, the AI/AN FACES 2015 sample was designed to support estimates for the population of children enrolled in Region XI programs. Findings from AI/AN FACES 2015 data cannot be generalized to the total population of AI/AN children in Head Start in all regions nor can they be generalized to the AI/AN children who are not in Head Start. The AI/AN FACES 2015 User's Manual provides additional detailed information about the AI/AN FACES 2015 population of interest and sample.

AI/AN FACES 2015 Best Practice 3: AI/AN FACES 2015 data should be used to describe the population of children and families in Region XI Head Start *as a whole*. Data cannot be used to

describe individual programs, communities, or geographic regions within Region XI, nor to make comparisons between them.

Rationale: AI/AN FACES 2015 was designed to describe the entire population of children in Region XI Head Start. There are several reasons that descriptions of, or comparisons between, subsets of the AI/AN FACES 2015 sample are not possible. First, sub-samples of programs, communities, or regions are too small to yield reliable statistical estimates. Second, in order to provide maximal privacy protections for the communities, programs, and individuals participating in AI/AN FACES 2015, community, program, and individual tribal identifiers are omitted from the dataset. Although there are important differences between Region XI programs, communities, and tribes—for example, with respect to culture, language, and geography—AI/AN FACES 2015 was not designed for analyses of these differences, prioritizing instead a design that supports national-level descriptive analyses and findings. The National Congress of American Indians report “Tips for Researchers” (NCAI Policy Research Center 2016) speaks to the value of both locally situated studies as well as national studies with AI/AN populations. Their website also describes concerns about AI/AN communities being “the Asterisk Nation” (<http://www.ncai.org/policy-research-center/research-data/data>) and of the need for nationally representative studies in particular to fill existing AI/AN data gaps. Though designed to be representative of Region XI Head Start programs nationally, the inability of AI/AN FACES 2015 data to speak to variations by program, community, and tribe can be noted as a limitation—albeit one that was intentional and related to the purpose of the study.

AI/AN FACES 2015 Best Practice 4: Research using AI/AN FACES 2015 data should focus on strengths as well as challenges within the Region XI population.

Rationale: AI/AN communities have struggled when it comes to the health of their populations, with disparities in health and well-being across the lifespan having been amply documented in the

literature. An exclusive focus on challenges, however, risks marginalizing AI/AN populations, as well as missing opportunities for identifying strengths that can be drawn upon in surmounting challenges or celebrated in their own right. While it is important to identify and understand the challenges faced by Region XI Head Start children and their families so that Head Start resources can be brought to bear on efforts to ameliorate those challenges, it is equally important to identify the strengths in order to provide a full picture of the Region XI AI/AN Head Start population. AI/AN FACES 2015 was designed to measure a full range of experiences among Region XI Head Start children and families, and researchers are encouraged to draw upon this full array of data.

AI/AN FACES 2015 Best Practice 5: Findings based on AI/AN FACES 2015 data should be framed, to the extent possible, with an appreciation for the broader, and often times, complex context in which they occur.

Rationale: AI/AN communities face enormous challenges. They have rates of poverty and unemployment that exceed those of other populations, experience physical and mental health disparities relative to other populations, and encounter structural challenges related to the availability of quality housing, nutritious and fresh food, adequate healthcare, strong educational systems, healthy and safe physical environments, and effective law enforcement. These contemporary challenges are rooted in a historical context in which Indigenous populations experienced loss of life, land, culture, and language in their encounters with the United States. Though AI/AN FACES 2015 was not designed to explore these broader contemporary and historical challenges, they nonetheless should be considered and referenced, if applicable, when discussing findings. Likewise, the strength and resilience of tribal communities should be considered. Despite the challenges faced by tribal communities and periods of great upheaval, AI/AN cultures and values have persisted. Cultural traditions and identity remain a source of strength, resilience, and well-being. Researchers should therefore consider how tribal culture

intertwines with experiences in the community, Head Start, and home as they situate AI/AN FACES 2015 findings also within a context of cultural strength and resilience.

AI/AN FACES 2015 Best Practice 6: Technical guidelines for using AI/AN FACES 2015 data should be followed. An overview of the technical considerations for working with AI/AN FACES 2015 data can be found in the “Getting Started” portion of the AI/AN FACES 2015 [User’s Manual](#).

Rationale: These guidelines have been developed based on many years of experience with the FACES study and other large-scale national studies of children and the programs that serve them. Key points to ensure appropriate use of the AI/AN FACES 2015 data include reading the full AI/AN FACES 2015 User’s Manual to understand the study design and data, reviewing the questionnaires and data to be familiar with any skip patterns, choosing the best analysis weights to produce estimates matching the research question and data and generalizable to the population, and calculating standard errors that take into account the complex sampling design used by AI/AN FACES 2015. Following this guidance ensures that the findings are accurate, generalizable, and representative of the population sampled by AI/AN FACES 2015.

Principal Investigator Acknowledgement

ACF is responsible for *ensuring data are stored, accessed, and used in accordance with* the study agreements with the 21 federally recognized AI/AN communities whose data are included in the AI/AN FACES 2015 restricted use dataset. To that end, ACF requires that the Principal Investigators of research teams seeking access to the data for the purpose of secondary analysis and reporting acknowledge that they will follow the *Best Practices for Working with AI/AN FACES 2015 Data* as one of the conditions that must be met prior to being given data access. It is the Principal Investigator’s responsibility to ensure that that all members of his/her research team read this document and are informed about and follow these

Best Practices. Please complete the [acknowledgement form](#) in the AI/AN FACES 2015 Application Guide; this form can then be scanned and uploaded as part your application for data access.

Reading and Resource List

Research has great potential for promoting well-being and reducing disparities in AI/AN communities; at the same time, it has the potential for harm if not informed by lessons learned from the experience (both positive and negative) of history and of others in mind. There are resources within the peer-reviewed literature, as well as reports by national organizations and groups that address lessons learned and provide models for research that maximize the potential for benefit. The list here includes readings that are helpful for individuals seeking to deepen their understanding of the context for research with AI/AN communities. Publicly available materials that may be useful for those seeking access to AI/AN FACES 2015 data have been marked with an asterisk (*).

Two of the publically available readings are required readings that researchers seeking access to the data must acknowledge having read. The required readings are marked with a “+”.

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