

## **What Increases Risk and Protection for Delinquent Behaviors among American Indian Youth? Findings from Three Tribal Communities**

### **Abstract**

The primary purpose of this study was to compare the risk and protective factors for delinquent behaviors among American Indian youth in three distinct tribal communities. Focus group discussions were used to gather data from elders, parents, youth workers, and youth in each tribal community. Findings showed that the key source for increasing risk and protection for delinquent behaviors among American Indian youth is the family. In particular is the protective presence of a parent, and having a parent available for discussing problems. Participants also revealed how many parents lack the knowledge and confidence to discipline their children. These findings suggest a need for programs that strengthen parent-adolescent communication, parenting skills, and offer cultural teachings and sensitivity training for school personnel. Interventions also need to be specific to the cultural context and cannot assume the same risk and protective factors will apply to all American Indian youth.

**Key words:** American Indian youth, delinquency, risk and protective factors