



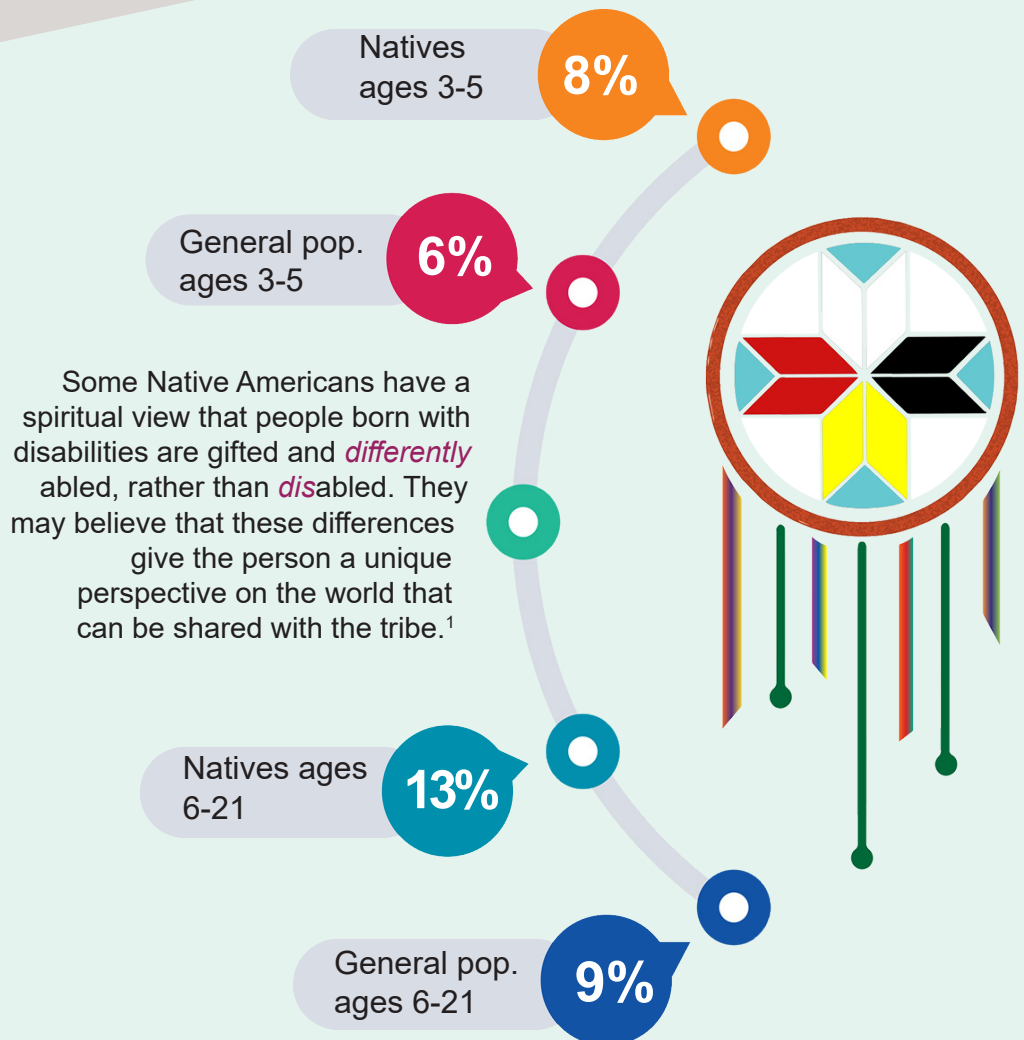
Native Approaches to Special Education (NASPED)

Framework and Application

Native Approaches to Special Education (NASPED) promotes wellness within Native populations living with disabilities by incorporating protective factors of Native culture into education and service delivery systems. It is a strength-based, holistic, and culturally informed approach that aims to increase resources, awareness, knowledge, skill, and advocacy for parents, caregivers, families, and service providers of Native youth with disabilities.

Native children living with disabilities are exposed to higher levels of trauma than youth without disabilities.¹ Documented intergenerational trauma experienced by Native populations compounds the adverse impacts of the disability experience for Native youth.²

Disparities in eligibility for Special Education services²



The NASPED Framework consists of four interconnected principles that promote optimal care for Native youth living with disabilities.

Culture: Culture is a central source of identity, strength, and healing for AI/AN populations. Integrating traditional values, languages, and practices into services enhances engagement and supports wellness. Including culture when working with AI/AN populations leads to more effective, respectful, and equitable outcomes by fostering trust, improving engagement, and affirming tribal sovereignty.

Community: Native and non-Native service systems can facilitate community involvement and provide culturally appropriate services for youth and families. Two ways to emphasize Community & Culture:

- Develop partnerships with tribal community organizations by designing, developing, and implementing support programs for tribal students, families, and communities.
- Host cultural presentations for schools and organizations to learn about specific community cultures and history.

Education: School settings, educational curricula, and the personnel who deliver services impact the wellbeing of Native youth with disabilities. Native communities also maintain their own systems and methods for educating their members. Two ways formal and informal education systems can provide culturally informed services:

- Incorporate culturally relevant materials and curriculum into classroom activities.
- Invite local Elders, cultural practitioners, and tribal leaders to present or participate in school activities.

Relationships:

Healthy and supportive relationships are paramount for Native youth and families to thrive. Many of these relationships can be found within the community and tribal service delivery systems. Healthy relationships are a strong protective factor for Native youth and families experiencing disability. Two ways to build positive relationships:

- Purposefully engage tribal families in developing school-based programs, service delivery systems, and/or activities.
- Support and build capacity to include tribal family advocates in school, service delivery, and/or programming.

Resources: Access to available resources to provide for basic needs and tailored services improves the overall quality of life for Native youth and families living with disabilities. Many tribal service delivery systems lack the necessary infrastructure to adequately serve Native youth and families.³ Two ways to address obstacles that many families face in accessing resources outside a tribal service delivery system:

- Develop a tribally specific resource guide for your organization, school, and/or community.
- Develop a list of tribal members, partners, and/or organizations to collaborate with in developing tribal services.



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