

# Addressing Racial Misclassification in Cancer Data

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## SUMMARY

The South Dakota Cancer Registry (SDCR) has collected data and reported on cancer incidence in South Dakota since 2001.

The SDCR has implemented a comprehensive partnership network and systematic verification process to reduce racial misclassification in cancer data, particularly for American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) populations. This improved accuracy enables cancer prevention and control efforts to reach priority populations more effectively through collaboration with the Indian Health Service (IHS), tribal organizations, and health care partners.

## CHALLENGES

- American Indian and Alaska Native people have high rates of racial misclassification in health data.
- Racial misclassification in cancer registries has historically led to underreported cancer rates in tribal communities.
- Underreporting resulted in inadequate funding for cancer programs in the Northern Plains region.
- AIAN populations have a higher burden of major cancer risk factors and are more likely to be diagnosed at later stages.
- Accurate racial classification requires a coordinated effort among multiple organizations.
- Careful attention is needed at every step of data collection and verification.

## SOLUTION

The SDCR:

- Began accepting cancer reports from an out-of-state pathology laboratory used by South Dakota IHS medical facilities.
- Implemented annual linkages with IHS data.
- Established partnerships with the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board, Registry Partners Inc., and breast and cervical cancer early detection programs such as All Women Count!, Honor Every Woman, and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe's Women's Health program.
- Established systematic death clearance processes with South Dakota's Vital Records office.

## RESULTS

- Found cancer cases diagnosed among AIAN people at IHS medical facilities.
- Found cancer cases diagnosed among AIAN people through patient linkages with breast and cervical cancer early detection programs.
- Achieved 100% accuracy for racial data elements in the 2024 CDC National Program of Cancer Registries Data, Quality, and Evaluation.
- Consistently found fewer than 0.10% of cases racially misclassified in IHS linkage results.
- Updated the cancer registry database with IHS linkage results.
- Created a multi-partner verification system throughout the data collection process.
- Developed comprehensive case consolidation processes across multiple data sources.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

- Maintaining and expanding partner relationships with health care entities and tribal organizations.
- Conducting regular linkages, data quality checks, and verification processes.
- Supporting improved initial documentation at health care facilities.