



Naysho^w
Native American Youth Sleep
Health and Wellness

Mental health, family functioning, and sleep in cultural context among American Indian/Alaska Native urban youth: A mixed methods analysis

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RAND, UCLA, and Sacred Path Indigenous Wellness Center have received a 5-year grant to work with urban American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities to better understand AI/AN adolescent health and sleep behaviors. This award-winning publication from the journal *Social Science and Medicine* describes some of the important findings from this research.

SUMMARY

Mental health problems like depression and anxiety are experienced by people in every culture and country around the world. The pressures and stresses we may feel from family life, jobs, relationships, and physical problems like lack of sleep can affect greatly one's state of mind. Research shows that urban American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth—those not living on reservations or tribal lands and who live in poorer areas—feel these life stressors very strongly. In the U.S., AI/AN youth have very high rates of both mental health and sleep problems, and family dynamics can have a lot to do

dark. One brother may have a different sleep schedule than another, or a cousin may snore. There may be conflicts in the household. The family may live on an especially noisy street or have loud neighbors. These factors and others can cause disturbances throughout the night, resulting in poor sleep.

In our Native American Youth Sleep Health and Wellness (NAYSHAW) study, we looked at how these and other disruptions affected the quality of sleep and sense of well-being in AI/AN youth. We found that they experienced less

depression and anxiety and that disturbances in sleep were eased when they made a point to do things that created a sense of togetherness with their parents, siblings, and extended families. Teens described that taking part

in family-centered traditional activities with their larger Native community also had a positive effect on sleep, mental health, and overall quality of life.

HIGHLIGHTS

“Well, [my little brother] is just like, dirty, leaves everything around. And sometimes he shakes in the bed and keeps me awake at night sometimes.”

[Read the full article](#) published in the journal, *Social Science and Medicine*.



Dr. Alina Palimaru (Ph.D., Health Policy and Management) is a Policy Researcher at the RAND Corporation. Her interests and experience include patient-centered care and health-related quality of life research.

With this article and supporting research, Dr. Palimaru has been presented with the **Matilda White Riley Award** for Early-Stage Investigators by the National Institutes of Health.



The award recognizes emerging scientists whose research reflects Dr. Riley's vision of research excellence in health-related behavioral and social sciences.

HIGHLIGHTS

“I had my grandma staying with us, so she was in the same room with me. So I felt like really happy in a way because I used to live with her when I was younger, so it felt like more complete in a way.”

with these difficulties. Some siblings may have to share a room, or even a bed. Someone may prefer to sleep with a light on while another may want the room



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