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**THE ANUKEY PROJECT**

**A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF  
RAMSEY COUNTY - AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIP**

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***A Note to the Reader:***

*It is common in mainstream social service systems to overlook the American Indian community and its culture when working with tribal people. A system which measures success based on substantive, quantitative outcomes tends to diminish the cultural traditions, strengths and spiritual self of the people it intends to serve. The spiritual and cultural part of an Indian person's self-identity must be recognized, the values, ways of thinking, being and living must be respected and allowed so hope, promise, and meaning emerge. The spiritual aspect of an Indian person's life in too many instances neither receives the recognition it deserves nor is it included in program activities of human service delivery systems. The Native peoples beliefs systems of the Western Hemisphere go unappreciated by others. Few of those others know of the "creation stories" that define American Indians; that their ancestors came from both "Ishpeming," the heavens, and beneath the waters of this earth.*

*The cultural psychology of American Indians is not very well understood by non-Indians because it has had little opportunity to learn about it in their training, education and experience. The Indian cultural psychology is inextricably intertwined in the minds and culture of American Indians. Even though some Indian women participants of this partnership said they had limited cultural exposure they, nonetheless possess a yearning to learn more.*

*This knowledge is at the core of Indian identity and connects the Indian world view of oral traditions, spirituality, language and culture. This energy, once tapped into leads to balance in all parts of one's personal life as envisioned by the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel concept promotes spiritual, mental, intellectual and emotional growth of Indian individuals. The community driven approach to reducing MFIP disparities and the calm created by thoughtful leadership of American Indian Family Center (AIFC) on behalf of the St. Paul Indian community and Ramsey County MFIP service providers contributed to the improved self-esteem, pride and more positive and full participation of MFIP participants. The Anukey project has played a significant part in present community capacity-building and should not stop here. Rather, it should be looked on as a demonstration project that provides evidence that human service delivery systems can have their productivity enhanced if they acknowledge the heretofore unrecognized cultural strengths of American Indians that are essential to improving one's quality of life.*

*John Poupart, President  
American Indian Policy Center*

## INTRODUCTION

This report provides the results of a qualitative evaluation of the Anukey Partnership (Anukey is an Ojibwe word meaning “to work”) conducted by the American Indian Policy Center in 2009. Through an earlier 2003 examination conducted by Ramsey County management found significant disparities in sanctions and outcomes for American Indian MFIP participants as compared to other racial ethnic groups. The leaders at the county approached key leaders in the American Indian community to share findings of disparities and to ask for advice and direction on eliminating these disparities. As a result of these concerns, Ramsey County management and the American Indian community developed a project to address these disparities. This project eventually evolved into Anukey, a partnership between Ramsey County and the American Indian community in Ramsey County Minnesota.

The activities of the partnership and this evaluation serve as reminders that there is little information about the history, contemporary situation, social norms and values of American Indians in the training and education experience of individuals in America’s social institutions. This means that little knowledge about American Indians is held by those working to develop, implement and evaluate programs within this community. In response to this condition and over the past 3-years, an Anukey training subcommittee focused on providing training and information about American Indian culture and values. Since that time, training sessions have occurred that involved human service providers, MFIP providers and American Indian Family Center staff. Five sessions were originally conducted for two years (American Indian 101). For the past year and the up-coming year these sessions have been reduced to three: tribal sovereignty; American Indian leadership/spirituality and culture; and, the residual effects of U.S. sponsored Boarding Schools that started in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and continuing on into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Another session (American Indian 102) is held for all those who took AI 101. All past session evaluations conducted by participants were aggregately scored at least 4.5 on a 0 to 5 range. A third session is currently in the planning stages and will include all former participants of AI 101 and 102. This third session intends to develop practical application for what participants previously learned

The absence in knowledge about American Indians is perpetuated by the way information is generated in mainstream society. In trying to examine American Indians, practitioners historically relied on research designs and methods developed from the outsider perspective, which have been ineffective in capturing the reality of the oral history, experiences of American Indian people and the social and cultural norms of these communities.

This evaluation also attempts to address limitations of previous efforts to evaluate programs such as Anukey – programs that serve American Indians and whose roots lie in the history, culture, spirituality and values of American Indians. The American Indian Policy Center, an American Indian run organization with a long history of work with American Indian people in this area provided the lead role in this evaluation. This evaluation report is written to contribute to an understanding about American Indians in Ramsey County as well as the success of the Partnership in meeting the initial goals of building trust, reducing sanctions and increasing successful transition off MFIP. Also included in results are what stakeholders thought was good,

what was not so good, and what improvements might help the partnership work well in the future. The report answers questions about how locating the Anukey partnership at the American Indian Family Center, in the heart of the Indian community, made a difference for American Indian MFIP participants. To do so, the AIPC uses a distinctive approach in research design and methods for planning, collecting, and analyzing evaluation results. This report does not intend to be quantitative, but does utilize quantitative data to establish that American Indians are currently experiencing different and poorer outcomes than others.

This report summarizes the findings of the evaluation effort. Report sections include the methodology used for this study, a description of the partnership from an American Indian perspective and a summary of the current work including the population served and services provided. Findings include the results of talking circles and key informant interviews about the partnership's success, challenges, and future direction. The report concludes with recommendations for the future from what evaluators learned in the process of interviews, talking circles, and a review of the data. These recommendations are the result of what was learned through the strengths, challenges, and activities of the Anukey Partnership over the last several years.

## **EVALUATION APPROACH**

The reality of American Indian communities is shaped by the way American Indians continue to view the world around them; in a holistic, spherical fashion. This worldview is in direct contrast to the linear manner of thinking held by most mainstream social service practitioners. American Indian people possess substantial experiential knowledge and can provide huge amounts of internal information about their worldview and the social functions of the American Indian community so that non-Indians might better understand them. Social researchers and program evaluators historically have not seen the value of such informal information, much less the value of relationships.

Through no fault of their own, non-Indian evaluators in the past followed a logical path created for them by social service program designers with much of it following linear, compartmentalized and sequential thinking models. The evaluators ordinarily utilized quantitative methods with its attendant data to measure outcomes to ascertain gains or losses. In the past, this was unfair to Indian participants because such evaluation methods did not include a reflection of the reality of American Indians. The informal and intrinsic information available within Indian communities was overlooked, undervalued and misinterpreted. Failure to recognize this aspect of evaluation supports continued misinformation about the experiences of American Indians.

Relatively recent changes in mainstream research methods attempt to overcome some of these weaknesses by making research projects participatory in American Indian communities and other communities of color. One of these concepts is called community-based participatory research (CBPR). As much as these renewed methods try, the reality and truths that exist among American Indians escape capture; mainly because CBPR relies greatly on European-based thinking. Furthermore, labeling an effort participatory does not ensure the use of culturally appropriate research methods or strategies for engaging American Indian communities. Many

contemporary researchers, however, do see the mistakes of the past and are beginning to more and more utilize qualitative research. Evaluators too, have now begun to follow suit.

Qualitative evaluations it seems are now becoming in vogue. The research and evaluation approach used by the American Indian Policy Center, called reality-based research, is proving to be an excellent bridge between the quantitative and qualitative evaluations conducted in American Indian communities. Reality based research does not dispute CBPR but instead increases its potential in American Indian communities by making the approach more relational, culturally sensitive and responsive. Ramsey County contracted with the American Indian Policy Center to conduct an evaluation of the Anukey Partnership, based on the principles of reality based research. The methodology section describes this approach more fully.

## **EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

Several questions were posed to guide this evaluation. In addition to a description of the current partnership and the infrastructure established as a result of the Partnership, the populations being served, the providers of service, and results of training and educational activities, several other questions focus on the outcomes established early in the development of the Partnership. Questions include:

- How has Anukey resulted in changes in objectives identified in the early stages of the Partnership?
  - Building trust
  - Decreasing sanctions imposed on American Indian participants
  - Successful transitions of participants off MFIP
- How does the Partnership address the needs of stakeholder groups
- What are the successes/accomplishments and the challenges of the Partnership in meeting the needs of stakeholders?
- What are some next steps in building the infrastructure to continue to serve the needs of stakeholders?

These questions relate to the original objectives identified by Ramsey County and the American Indian community in Ramsey County at the origination of the Partnership and at the time that Ramsey County contracted for this evaluation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This evaluation, as stated earlier, utilizes the reality-based research model. The reality-based research model and its approach to evaluation incorporate American Indian values and indigenous ways of knowing. The primary goal of a reality-based approach is to accurately represent the cultural reality of American Indians in the evaluation process. It genuinely engages American Indian individuals in each phase of the research process from (1) identification of the issue; (2) definition of terms, strategies, outcomes, and goals; (3) design of data collection instruments; (4) analysis of information and data; (5) development of strategies and activities;

and (6) evaluation of outcomes (AIPC, 2000). Participants are able to build consensus through this approach because it is both culturally appropriate and cooperative. Because self-determination is valued in American Indian communities, creating opportunities to participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of programs is critical.

The three methods employed in this evaluation include a review of available documents, talking circles, and key informant interviews with key stakeholder groups. The key stakeholders identified for this evaluation include Ramsey County Workforce Solutions, the American Indian Family Center, other employment service providers and clients receiving services from the programs offered through the Anukey Partnership.

### *Document Review*

The purpose of the document review is to look for information in existing materials to answer evaluation questions on objectives and to perform an assessment of outcomes and indicators. The document review for this project involved a review of existing reports, data, records and documents available at the partner level. These included proposals, other evaluation reports, annual reports, program materials and studies. In addition, notes from community meetings were also reviewed.

### *Talking Circles*

To obtain information from American Indian communities requires that a trusting relationship be established. The practice of utilizing talking circles is a valuable asset when conducting evaluations among American Indians. Using the traditional American Indian approach of talking circles to gather information and to augment other methods of data collection is a particular strength as scientific approaches may fail to discern the cultural nuances of the American Indian community. Talking circles are endemic to the traditional ways of American Indian people in that they promote a safe and comfortable place to share opinions and encourage discussion. Talking circles allow for the stories that form the fabric of the oral history of American Indian life to be told and reveals the manner in which Indian people utilize relationship building as a way to form trust; thus, making it inclusive for American Indians. A total of six talking circles were conducted with key stakeholders. Five talking circles were hosted with individuals receiving MFIP services from the American Indian Family Center and one talking circle was hosted with employment service program managers. Talking circles conducted with American Indian MFIP clients were an extremely helpful tool in defining culturally unique Indian attitudes and behaviors. The talking circles helped clarify some partnership activities but a significant amount of information derived from this method, within the scope of this qualitative evaluation, describes how the Anukey partnership impacts American Indians. In this project, talking circles contributed to an understanding of how American Indian culture, values, and traditions are respected in service provision and how mutual trust has been built through the Anukey Partnership.

### *Key Informant Interviews*

Key informant interviews are a qualitative evaluation method that utilizes individuals who possess first-hand knowledge of a specific topic within a community. Through the interview process, the individual provides experiential insight about the topic. Key informant interviews are particularly useful in American Indian communities where data or program information may not be routinely published in the peer reviewed literature or made available to external audiences. Key informant interviews were conducted with 12 key stakeholders with first-hand knowledge of the Partnership and the employment services provided through the Anukey Partnership.

### *Procedure*

Individuals were invited to participate in person, by telephone and by email. It is important to note that all participants either knew the person who invited them or were familiar with their work. The background and purpose of the evaluation were explained during recruitment and at the beginning of each session. With the exception of two interviews, hosted at county offices, all sessions were hosted in meeting rooms at the American Indian Family Center in St. Paul. Participants of the talking circles were provided a meal and a \$25 gift card for their participation. Verbal consent, which included permission to record, was obtained prior to each session. All sessions were facilitated by a member of the evaluation team. The facilitators used a semi-structured talking circle guide and a key informant interview guide to elicit information pertinent to the key aims of the evaluation. The guides were developed by key stakeholders and the evaluation team. The topics addressed included: 1) value of the partnership; 2) strengths of the partnership; and 3) challenges of the partnership or areas for improvement in the future. The facilitators also utilized probes and expanded on responses provided in the sessions to encourage further discussion as necessary. Participants were encouraged but not required to respond to each question.

### *Data Analysis*

Talking circle sessions and key informant interviews were recorded. Notes from each session were also documented on a note-taking form developed for this evaluation. Digital recordings of sessions were transcribed. Introductions and all personal identifiers were excluded from documents to protect anonymity of participants. Talking circles and key informant interviews were analyzed according to standard qualitative data analysis techniques. Responses were reviewed independently and key words, phrases and sentences were coded and organized into themes. Discussions were held to resolve differences. The recordings were utilized to clarify the notes and document direct quotes. Key topics and final themes emerged from coding.

## **ANUKEY PARTNERSHIP**

Following the Indian urbanization phenomenon of the 1950s where great numbers of Indians were enticed by “start-up” monies furnished by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to move to cities scattered throughout the nation. When Indians moved to the cities and found themselves in the



same financial situation as they had left at the reservation they often turned to public welfare for financial assistance.

The urbanization of Indians is not a recent development. It began early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and continues to this day. Prior to urbanization the Dakota and Chippewa primarily lived on 11 reservations in Minnesota (4 Dakota and 7 Chippewa). These reservations are what remain of what was once all Indian land in Minnesota. "Between 1850 and 1940, the vast majority of Minnesota Indians lived on reservations located in rural areas. In fact, the best estimate of the combined Indian population of Hennepin and Ramsey counties in 1940 was 233. In 1928, an investigation of the condition of American Indians estimated that 600 lived in Minneapolis and St. Paul area; 12 years later, the federal census counted only 145 Indians. In 1950, the census counted 589 Indians in the Twin Cities and the 1980 census counted 9,198 in Minneapolis alone."<sup>1</sup> Today, approximately 3,400 Indians live in St. Paul. The greatest increase occurred during the 1950s and 1960s. The increase is attributed to Indians returning from military service following World War II and the Korean Conflict. Minneapolis was the site of the military recruiting station and very close to the transcontinental railroad station connected to local railroads leading to many Indian reservations.

Another important influence to urbanization was the federal Indian policy as contained in the 1950s Relocation Program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As stated earlier, this policy meant to solve the "Indian Problem" by relocating Indians to urban areas for employment opportunities. In fact, the program was cloaked in terms of "the employment assistance program," rather than relocation. Another federal policy at the time was the "termination" policy that sought to end the U.S. Government legal and political relationship born out of the treaties between Indian tribes and the United States.

It would have been to their benefit if Indians had developed interactions between themselves and the local county government, but they never did. Any relationship would have made this transition easier, because in those days most Indians came to the urban area as poor people; looking for housing, jobs, and educational resources. Conditions like these stem from the poverty they experienced on the reservation and which followed them to the cities, bringing them in direct contact with Ramsey County's human service providers. The lack of this relationship-building provides a historic cultural indication that Indians as a group think differently than non-Indians. The Anukey Partnership is the first formal relationship between American Indians and Ramsey County services.

The distrust that Indians have toward America's social institutions is historical, dating back to the period when treaties were negotiated between Indian tribes and the U.S. government; only to have such agreements broken again and again by the government. Another important factor contributing to the lack of trust is the boarding schools that took Indian children from their homes and transported them great distances away from their natural families, forced them to attend school, abandon their native languages, and further forced them to dress like Europeans. These actions have stood in the way of authentic relationships developing between Indians and

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<sup>1</sup> *Danforth, Pauline in Hennepin County History, Hennepin County Historical Society, Winter 1989-90.*

non-Indians. Without a very real personal relationship with Indian clients it is difficult to gain their trust and cooperation.

The creation of the Anukey Partnership was born out of common cause. Ramsey County MFIP realized that it needed to do better working with American Indians and the leaders in the Indian community sensed they could do better programming if they knew more about Ramsey County. In essence, a partnership encouraged both to work for common goals for providing improved services to American Indian clients. The Anukey Partnership serves as a host for mainstream values to connect with traditional Indian cultural values. The cohesion of values translates to what is called an “authentic partnership.”

## **FINDINGS**

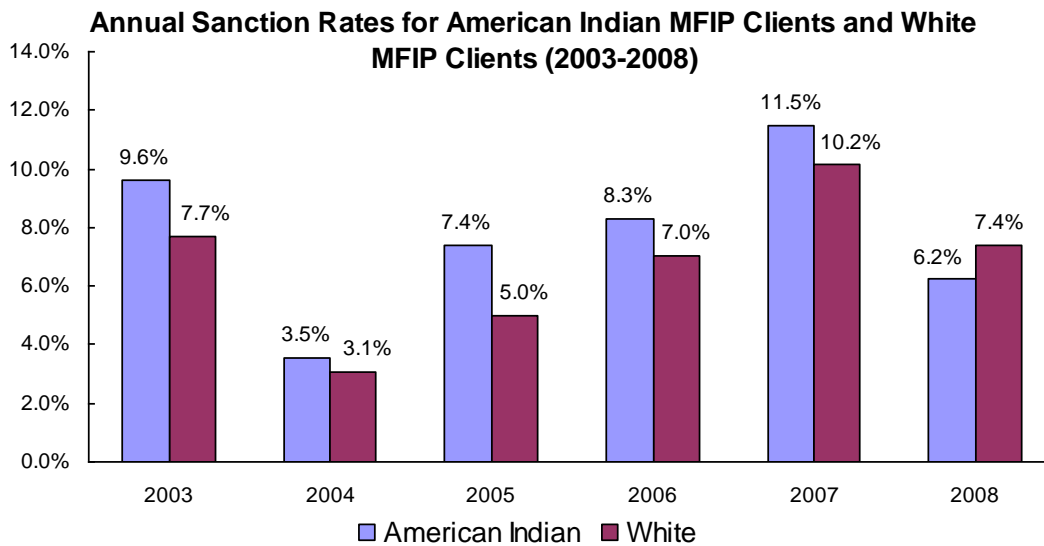
### ***How has the Anukey Partnership resulted in changes in objectives?***

- ***Reduce Sanctions and Increase Successful Transition off MFIP***

Initial data identified significant disparities in the rate of sanctions by racial/ethnic groups in Ramsey County. This data indicated that American Indians were sanctioned more often than any other racial/ethnic group. From 1997-2002, 49 percent of American Indians were sanctioned because they failed to meet some requirement of the program. In comparison, 31 percent white, 37 percent Black, 15 percent Asian and 30 percent Hispanic were sanctioned. Initial sanction guidelines indicated that families were sanctioned for a number of reasons including failure to look for work, take a job, attend meetings with their job counselor, etc. This data along with other data documenting disparities created the impetus for the formation of the Anukey partnership. Included in the original outcomes of the project was the reduction of sanctions, reduction in the disparities of sanctions for American Indians as compared to other groups and an increase in successful transitions of clients off MFIP.

Due to a complicated history of the partnership itself, changes in coding for race/ethnicity and small numbers of American Indians, there have been inconsistencies in data related to outcome measures by racial ethnic group. Those inconsistencies make it difficult to assess the success or failure of the partnership to meet their objectives, as well as document the impact of the program. Although those issues have been resolved, inconsistencies in some of the past data remain because of those factors. Because of these issues, after 2002, the method used to calculate sanction rates was discontinued because it represented a more cumulative or life-time rate, rather than the monthly rate which corresponds to other standard outcomes. As a result, the origination 49 percent sanction rate cannot be compared to sanction rates since 2003.

On May 12, 2009 the Anukey presentation to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners presented more standardized data displaying disparities in sanction rates for American Indians as compared to Whites. The trend data provided in this presentation indicated that the rates for American Indians were 1.3 times that of Whites in 2003. In 2007, the year following the initiation of the partnership’s activities, the difference in sanction rates for American Indians and Whites narrowed to 1.1 and in 2008 the sanctions rates for American Indians (6.2 percent) were actually lower than the White rate (7.4 percent).



Supplemental information for the May 12 Anukey Partnership presentation to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners also provided examples of some positive trends for American Indian rates of sanctions, income, and employment.

- 2003-2008 sanction rates for American Indians showed trends similar to other groups until 2008 when the sanction rates fell below that of whites, African Americans, Asians, and Latino Hispanics
- MFIP participant employment information shows that American Indians have shown a steady increase in employment from 2004 to 2008, resulting in employment rates that are close to whites for both part-time and full-time work
- The rate of American Indians leaving MFIP with wages was stable from 2003 to 2006 increasing in 2007
- The percent of clients going off MFIP or working showed no increase from 2005-2006 but increased in both 2007-2008

While these positive trends seem to point to the success of the Anukey partnership (Pre-Anukey is defined as 2003-September 2006 and Anukey began in October of 2006), this report also reiterates several limitations in interpreting the data (see text box).

The Anukey partnership originally sought to decrease sanction rates and reduce disparities in sanction rates for American Indians as compared to other racial/ethnic groups and increase the number of American Indian clients successfully transitioning off MFIP. While the data indicates movement in this direction, the data does not clearly establish that the services and activities of the Partnership are the cause of this movement.

Another outcome of examining the data is an understanding that as with most evaluation efforts focusing on American Indian programs or partnership such as Anukey, the data tell only a small part of the story. In later sections of this report, we attempt to identify and describe the need,

successes, challenges, and opportunities of the Anukey partnership through a unique qualitative process of data collection and interpretation.

### ***Caveats for Anukey Partnership Data Interpretation***

*Variations in population sizes should be considered when interpreting results. The American Indian population on MFIP is small (e.g. one-tenth the size of the African American population on MFIP in Ramsey County)*

*Various changes in MFIP policies and regulations affect the measures (e.g. changes in race definitions, changes in race categories)*

*Not possible to determine a causal relationship between the establishment of the Anukey Partnership and the subsequent change in measures. A change in a measure from pre-Anukey to Anukey period can be calculated but its cause cannot be established.*

*There are many other characteristics and factors that influence the measures such as number of children, education, marital status, stable housing, and age.*

*Follow-up presentation to Ramsey County Board  
on Anukey Partnership May 27, 2009*

- ***Building Trust***

Building trust was also identified as an objective in the development and planning process for the Anukey Partnership. Building trust is important in forming good working relationships. Trust building between American Indian communities and mainstream government institutions can prove difficult because many policies and programs developed historically have been harmful and ineffective. The trust between partners in the Anukey Partnership is a fundamental strength of this project. Key informants thought trust building was facilitated from the beginning when the county approached the community to understand the disparities in MFIP and determine more promising approaches for service delivery. The community viewed the county's efforts as a gesture of trust and soon became the guiding force in this effort as layers of leadership within the community were fully invested. The partnership was further described as a welcoming and comfortable environment where individuals could openly, honestly, and directly share concerns, opinions and ideas. One participant described feeling "authentically valued and respected." Participants believe the trust building process was facilitated by acknowledging the history, recognizing the need to invest time in establishing trust, and emphasizing personal relationships.

The following sections provide findings for evaluation questions posed including questions about meeting the needs of the Partnership, the successes, the challenges and building infrastructure.

- *Meeting the Needs of Stakeholders*

There are a number of groups with direct involvement and interest in this evaluation. Included are the MFIP clients, the American Indian Community in Ramsey County, Ramsey County Board of Commissioners, county workers, and social services and support workers. Each of these groups has a vested interest in the improving outcomes for American Indian MFIP participants.

Disparities in MFIP outcomes have been present in the American Indian community for many years. Stakeholders involved in the planning and development of the Anukey Partnership believed in the necessity of building and nurturing authentic relationships to facilitate change. Key informant interviews conducted with members of the Anukey Partnership continue to express their support for authentic relationships and support for a strong partnership between Ramsey County and the American Indian community.

The talking circle participants also spoke about how the Partnership meets their needs. Several mentioned that having American Indian employment counselors working with Indians in the community was meaningful. Several talking circle participants provided comments about MFIP services being located at the American Indian Family Center.

One person has a financial worker downtown, but she also has an employment counselor at AIFC said,

“Yes, I feel they are more sensitive to my beliefs and my culture and they have been very helpful. My financial worker was very hard to get a hold of and she didn’t really call me back; like last week I left her a message and I still haven’t heard from her, but my employment counselors here have been really helpful . . .”

Another person spoke of her experience of coming to the AIFC,

“I got transferred here from my old financial worker, and she is easy to work with, she never gives me a hard time. Like when I need a damage deposit, she’s like, “okay” because I was eligible for it but she didn’t make me struggle about it, she helped me get it. I didn’t expect it to work so smoothly.”

“I like coming here because it’s convenient. It seems better when you walk into the building and you pretty much know everybody.”

A young mother spoke about her financial worker at the AIFC.

“She is a good worker. This is my only baby (she had her baby with her) and so I don’t quite understand some of the language for MFIP yet, so I call her. She’s a good worker and does everything on time.”

Yet another talked about the differences she saw between AIFC and downtown Ramsey County services.

“I was downtown for a long time and now I’ve been here (at AIFC) for about 3 years, I think. I found it a lot better. I would rather stay here than go back down to Ramsey County building.”

Most MFIP clients had experience with a number of financial works and employment counselors and some were willing to discuss how they felt.

“I really like my employment counselor. Since I’ve been here though, this has been the second employment counselor that I’ve had. She is just there to help me with anything; she’s willing to work around anything I need to work around. If I can’t make an appointment, she gives me advance notice on everything. It’s really nice rather than the employment counselor I had downtown at first, they just call you when you miss that appointment and automatically send you a sanction letter. It’s better, they are friendlier and will work more with you rather than, ‘you’re just another case’”

Lastly, one participant spoke directly about the Partnership.

When asked if having a worker at AIFC improves the relationship with the county, one young woman replied, “Heck Yeah, it’s profound. It’s nice knowing who your workers are instead of just being a name and a number. This is the feeling I got from Ramsey County as opposed to the personalized attention you receive here.”

Participants in key informant interviews provided some comments on community partnerships noting that community partnerships may be uncomfortable because they sometimes are not well defined (lack of clear outcomes for these partnerships) and it proves difficult to take risks in the public sector. Furthermore, partnerships that use the consensus model are difficult to nurture because it is challenging to balance the vision, discussion, and action. Participants, however, overwhelmingly believed the benefits of community partnerships outweigh these risks in the long term because such an approach is a promising way to eliminate the presence of big buildings and entities, logistics, rules and the experience of being in the middle of the system looking out. Many participants also believed partnerships make it easier to provide the services needed by clients and are the only way to be successful when working with communities now and in the future.

The creation and maintenance of this partnership is of utmost importance to all its members. Overwhelmingly, professionals participating in the talking circles were very clear in their praise and showed pride for involvement with Anukey. The benefits gained by working with the partnership seemed to have given them a rare opportunity to learn first-hand and in-depth about Indians. Absence of authentic knowledge about Indian people in mainstream society does little to dispel misconceptions and perhaps has aided in forestalling the forming of relationships with them.

Development of authentic relationships is also of great importance to stakeholders when developing partnerships but this human part of the process is what is generally lost first in systems approaches. The Anukey Partnership appears to have overcome some of the challenges of not having a working relationship with the St. Paul Indian community. Both community and county partners invested time to get to know one another. Individuals from the county acknowledged that person-to-person relationships are important to American Indians. They also recognized the value of getting to know individuals from the community on a personal basis. To facilitate the relationship building piece individuals created opportunities to meet and interact. Some people from the community-county partnership described attending community events, such as powwows, with their families.

## **SUCSESSES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- *Co-learning*

A mutual learning opportunity created through an authentic partnership that recognizes the strengths, resources, and limitations of each partner was mentioned as an accomplishment of the Anukey Partnership. The county holds knowledge about the policy, rules, regulations and decision making authority about MFIP services. The community possesses expertise about the culture, history, and needs of Indian people. The true social norms and traditional values of American Indians were not part of the curriculum in K-12 school or higher education. Consequently, most non-Indians have a difficult time relating to members of the Indian community, and it was acknowledged that there was little history to guide capacity-building in this regard. In addition, training and updates regarding employment services rules and regulations are a constant need. Leadership of the partnership, before it was a partnership, recognized these challenges. The sharing of these areas of expertise has created a co-learning experience. The training opportunities developed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge were consistently described as helpful and useful. Partners further believed the trainings regarding cultural competency were positive experiences because they were historical, factual and non-accusatory which bypasses guilt about what has been done in the past and instead frames the issue in terms of working across cultures.

- *Indian participation in planning and design*

One of the most commonly noted strengths of the partnership is its ability to represent the needs of the Indian community. The AIPC and AIFC represent the community well because both organizations understand the cultural differences, unique needs, and strengths of the Indian community. This approach has contributed to a deeper understanding of the services needed, more effective strategies for service delivery, and an insistence of values that take into account the cultural differences in the community.

- *Systems development*

Seldom are systems examined for what they lack in terms of being meaningful to American Indian communities. An element of strength within the Anukey Partnership is the acknowledgement that in order to improve outcomes for American Indian families it is necessary to define and develop more meaningful methods and strategies in the delivery of services. Interview participants believed the development of more meaningful services was facilitated from the beginning when the county approached the community with a willingness to listen to better understand the disparities in MFIP and determine more promising approaches for service delivery. Moreover, an increased understanding occurred among county staff that the Anukey participants faced many issues other than just economics; and that other services were available at the AIFC to help manage these issues was helpful.

There is little historical information available that describes an American Indian community relationship before the Anukey project was developed. Thus, in the past, most systems responded to the challenges of underserved communities with a recalibration of internal controls of their agency, leaving little contact or involvement with the target community. It is evident, in light of the developing relationship with the American Indian community that MFIP services for this population are improving.

- *Culturally appropriate forum*

The size of caseloads in traditional employment services contributes to difficulty in establishing and maintaining individual relationships with clients. Employment counselors in the system traditionally rely on case notes, have less time to establish relationships, and lack familiarity with all the needs of their clients. There is, therefore, risk of losing sight of how to serve the community well. Identifying the need for a different approach and separating American Indian MFIP services from general county services is viewed as a very notable accomplishment.

However, as participants explained, the success is more than having separate services but is instead about taking a more appropriate approach by incorporating culture and a focus on aligning services with the needs and reality of American Indian families. In this approach, there is a focus on smaller caseloads and more personal services to improve the holistic outcomes for families. Formal notices about employment service issues are followed up with more personal forms of communication such as meetings and telephone calls. There are also more opportunities to build relationships, involve whole families, lead by example, and refer to other social service resources such as child care, chemical dependency and counseling services.

The location of services in the community at the American Indian Family Center created a culturally appropriate forum for these MFIP services. The American Indian Family Center and its leadership have a long history and strong reputation for providing service in the St. Paul Indian community. This was viewed as a strong feature because the organization has knowledge of the community which contributes to its ability to be culturally specific and reach out to the community in a different way. Key informants believed the convenient location, open door policy, small business feel and availability of other services positively affects the way clients participate.



As a client in a talking circle explained:

“It’s better here [at AIFC] because of the workshops and the programs and stuff that you’re offered, because downtown you are required to attend a week-long workshop with job training, resume classes, and stuff like that. Rather here it’s more of an option and you get an incentive so it makes you want to go.”

Another young woman talked about the other services she has used at AIFC:

“I like other things, like I am in Healthy Start (an infant mortality reduction program) and I really like Healthy Start. And they have parenting classes too that I go to and where you can go and meet other people. I’ve been to ECFE School that they have on Tuesday night; that helps out too.”

Another person said that she too had an opportunity to go to other things at the AIFC that were helpful:

“I’ve been to Mother’s Circle and to a parenting group where it was more about us. The kids went in to a classroom and we went in to another one.”

Several comments were made about how people felt about the experience they had with services and personnel at AIFC:

“I think it works better being here, and then there are other people I work with here, so if I have problem and can’t get hold of my worker, then I can talk to one of those people and they see if they can do something. I think it’s easier and I don’t like taking the buses and going downtown or to the Bigelow Building. Plus, I think that if you are involved in other programs here at the Center, it’s more convenient if you can just pop in on your workers, pick up bus cards or some forms, whatever, so it’s convenient”

“But not only do I use their financial services here, I also attend Wellbriety and AA, so I have these counselors available. I mean everything you can think they have it here available and if they don’t know, they are going to find it from someone. They will find the answer for you.”

Most American Indian MFIP clients were overwhelmingly appreciative of the financial workers and employment counselors being conveniently located at the American Indian Family Center. In addition, they recognized that other supportive human and family services were available. The synthesis created by the multi-sectored and multi-layered social services would be difficult to find in other places.

Still another said, when telling about how the service located at AIFC serve to stabilize her work:

“I think it has been more helpful having everything here in one building and to have the workers and to have the relationship with them. It’s been good, I mean honestly it’s worked in a positive way as far as me being able to, you know,

maintain my job. I've been at my same job for awhile now. [It is] just really good support.”

While there were a number of accomplishments and successes in implementing Anukey, there are also a number of challenges mentioned.

## **PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES**

- ***Client Base and Services of Anukey***

Although clients knew that MFIP services were available at the AIFC, some clients said they knew little about the actual Anukey Partnership and seemed surprised when told that it had been in place for some time. In discussing the reason that employment services were available [at AIFC], one person said, “It was good they initiated this. I think that it was good, I do. That somebody cares enough about us to do that, I never knew how deep it went, I mean I think it’s excellent that people are advocating for us.” In the same discussion another person said, “I wish I had known why it was happening because I never knew. I just started doing stuff and you’re over here (at the AIFC) and it wasn’t like explained – this happened and this is why it happened – and these people, ‘they got your backs’ so this is why this is happening, you know what I mean? I have so much more respect for the situation.” While the Anukey partnership brings American Indian leaders and Ramsey county leaders together to mutually work on behalf of MFIP, a better job of informing MFIP clients of program components is recommended.

- ***Client Involvement in Partnership***

Some participants in key informant interviews would also like to see more client involvement at the partnership level because they think the partnership is still coming from the practitioner perspective. However, they acknowledged that the clientele are usually so immersed in their own situations and survival that they tend to not be invested or active in the process. Many interviewees would like to explore opportunities to engage and involve clients on the partnership level because their perspective is different from that of a practitioner.

- ***Social Factors that Contribute to Disparities***

Other determinants including social factors have an impact on the success of clients in transitioning off of MFIP and avoiding sanction. American Indians are disproportionately affected by historical trauma sometimes resulting in additional challenges including family issues, chemical dependency, racism, discrimination, physical, and mental health issues. These factors alone or in combination will have an impact on the success of these clients and once again, Anukey has little ability to address these societal issues. In addition, other social indicators show American Indian disparities the sectors of education, child welfare that out of home placements, juvenile and criminal justice institution populations, and in a number of health areas. American Indian clients are challenged not only by unemployment, but other issues as well.

- *Staff Issues and Turnover*

The availability of caseworkers to address the multiple needs of clients and caseloads continues to be a challenge of the program. Several talking circle participants noted an inability to talk with their financial worker.

“I don’t think I ever met my financial worker to tell you the truth. It’s always been over the phone or through the mail that we correspond with each other.”

“I think I only see mine once a year when it’s certification time or whatever, or it’s over the phone or through the mail.”

Staff participating in key informant interviews believed that the caseload size for employment services offered at AIFC is growing too large. As a result, it has become challenging to maintain the one-on-one relationships with clients and know the details of individual cases because the numbers are growing so large. Most speculated this may be due to issues of human error and racial misclassification. The growing caseload numbers are viewed as an opportunity to more clearly define who the program is available to.

Finally, a challenge to the process of relationship building and service delivery is staff turnover. Turnover affects consistency; more consistency was viewed as making better relationships and service. Clients in talking circles noted that they have had more than one employment counselor since being referred to the AIFC for employment services.

- *Education of Providers*

Another challenge for the program is educating human service providers about the psychology of American Indians. Professional human service providers when trying to effectively communicate with American Indian clients may encounter barriers or gaps and may not be aware that they exist. Barriers to effective communication are apparent from the perspective of the professional human service provider as well as from the perspective of American Indian clients. Barriers for providers might include the lack the access to an education about or knowledge of American Indian history, values, customs practices, or worldview. From an American Indian client perspective these barriers might include distrust for the system as a result of the history and personal experiences in working with government agencies or lack of knowledge about the human services system.

Although the Anukey Partnership provides services in an environment that is respectful of American Indian culture and values, it is only a small part of programs and services that participants of MFIP encounter. Anukey can have only limited impact on outside resources and the American Indian MFIP clients continue to encounter providers without the tools to work effectively with these clients.

- *Community Partnership*

There remain challenges with placing county services within the community context including the rigidity of MFIP policies and differing definitions of outcomes and success. In addition, maintaining a reliable and consistent process for exchange of valuable program information has been difficult. Infrastructure and building issues, such as internet reliability and lack of space, were identified as areas for improvement. Maintaining and nurturing a continued partnership between Ramsey County and the American Indian community takes time and resources. For the County and American Indian community to continue to communicate about the benefits, challenges, and future directions of Anukuy is a continued challenge for all. The mutual experience of Indian community and Ramsey County is relatively young and the history of the distance between them so long in time, positive change does not come quickly; but the partnership does show promise.

## **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

In summary, we refer back to the original question, “Has the program met or moved in the direction of meeting the intended outcomes”? While the answer to this question is not a simple one because of a number of factors (e.g. complications for defining the program elements, changes in data definitions, limitations of the data), a review of the data indicates movement in a positive direction. What can be said is that the outcomes related to disparities (sanction rates, employment and wages of recipients) are moving in the right direction. Still we cannot say this is happening as a result of the Partnership.

Another outcome “building trust” is continually being built. Although there are remnants of harmful and ineffective programs, policies, and attitudes of past relations between government agencies and the American Indian community, the Partnership continues to bring Ramsey County officials and American Indian community representatives to the table. There are numerous examples of how trust is being built as well as the welcoming and comfortable environment experienced by the partners to share opinions, ideas, and concerns.

There are many other outcomes of the Partnership that are meeting the needs of the stakeholders. These include the partnership itself, the relationships built through the partnership, mutual learning, Indian participation in the development and implementation of the partnership and system changes. Most often, participants agreed locating services in the center of the community was of great importance. Several participants in talking circles noted that the location and the environment gave them the option or learning about and practicing cultural practices and beliefs with a staff that was sensitive, trustworthy, and respectful of American Indian values and traditions all of which were helpful to them in meeting their goals.

There were several strengths of the program mentioned by participants, (e.g. relationships, outreach and follow-up, location, environment) as well as challenges that remain (e.g. turnover, availability of financial workers, and multiple social determinants that sustain disparate results in outcomes).

In conclusion, the Anukey project achieved more than expected. The project, as it evolved was a transformational experience, as opposed to transactional. That is, it was a “work in progress” that helped with its success. While Anukey focused on the operational aspects of building a program, it intentionally integrated the community’s traditional Native values in all aspects of its programming. The paradigm shift away from the traditional “social service helping program” to a culturally affirming model grounded in age-old indigenous social systems served as its most stabilizing feature.

Lastly, it is important to build in a plan for evaluation that includes a process for identifying the outcomes and specific program components and activities. Without this process, it will be difficult to make a connection between the Partnership efforts and the effects of many other factors that create and sustain disparities in outcomes. There remains an ongoing need to conduct evaluation of this type to monitor the performance of the Partnership through the lens of the American Indian community. An evaluation of this type must be a part of the ongoing plan for the partnership.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Through the process of this evaluation and through our examination of the history, unique approach of Anukey, and the changes that have occurred over the years as a result of Anukey efforts, several recommendations for the future are provided.

- Continue Anukey Partnership and Partnership activities.
- At this juncture in the Anukey Partnership, a review of the Partnership, activities, vision and goals should occur to clarify what the partnership is how it should work, and what the next steps should be in continuing this work to reduce disparities.
- Review project outcomes; identify indicators and measures for each outcome.
- Define the Anukey population clearly including definitions of American Indian and who is included in the project. Eligibility requirements for participation in the program should be revisited, discussed and determined.
- Information about Anukey should be widely shared with all stakeholders of the partnership as well as potential partners from the broader community that could serve as worksite placements.
- Monitor and maintain caseload sizes where MFIP staff can conduct appropriate follow-up and outreach to clients. Review referral based on self-identification to keep case-load down.
- Continue to conduct evaluation that is culturally specific to American Indian community.
- Examine comparative service models, such as Tribal TANF, that include more flexible extensions for clients to meet their MFIP obligations in other ways such as education or community service/ volunteerism. (See **Appendix A** for comparison of MFIP and Tribal TANF.)
- Conduct a review to determine whether there are other approaches or examples of employment services programs with American Indian communities. This effort could also address issues regarding the work context within American Indian communities

including: work expectations within Indian communities; the range of professional preferences; and the work site placements that could be generated by the partnership.

- A case study of the Anukey Partnership experience should also be developed and written to share innovation and learning with other community groups and government entities. Anukey partnership could be a model for other locales and American Indian communities.
- Requirements for receiving continuing education credit or completion certificate for training should be developed for all those that work with American Indians. Training should also include an emphasis on the practical skills for delivering service within the American Indian community by incorporating activities, small group learning, and discussion about the scenarios encountered.
- Although barriers may be encountered, consideration should be given to combining roles of financial counselor and employment counselor for continuity and clarity in roles for staff and client.

This is the final evaluation report of the Anukey Partnership. For questions or assistance, contact John Poupart at the American Indian Policy Center at 651-644-1728 or [aipc@cpinternet.com](mailto:aipc@cpinternet.com). The transcripts of the talking circles conducted as a part of this evaluation are included (see **Appendix C**).

# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### TANF and MFIP/DWP Differences

#### **TRIBAL TANF:**

100% Of Tribal payment/Per capita payment is NOT counted against tribal TANF.

#### **Child Support:**

25% of the total child support received monthly Is counted for Tribal TANF as long as the MFIP/DWP Household is cooperating with child support.

#### **Child Under 2 Exemption:**

Participants are eligible for a 2 year exemption for a child less than 2 years of age.

#### **Earned Income Disregard:**

38% of gross wages is disregarded for TANF.

#### **Cultural Activities:**

Participants will have the option to hunt, fish & Gather as an employment activity.

#### **Child Support Non-Cooperation:**

The sanction amount is 25% of the Tribal TANF Grant. The caretaker also loses medical eligibility.

#### **Employment Services Sanctions:**

The Tribal TANF will remain open, even after 6 Occurrences of non-cooperation with Employment services and child support.

#### **Family Cap:**

No Family Cap exists under Tribal TANF

#### **Education:**

Up to four years are allowed under Tribal TANF if their education/training will make the family self-sufficient after completing education.

#### **MFIP/DWP:**

100% of Tribal payment/Per capita payment is counted dollar for dollar against MFIP/DWP.

#### **Child Support:**

100% of total child support received monthly is counted dollar for dollar against the Grant.

#### **Child under 12 weeks exemption:**

MFIP/DWP participants can only claim a 12 week exemption for the care of a newborn. Once all 12 weeks used, not available for any subsequent children.

#### **Earned Income Disregard:**

36% of gross wages is disregarded for MFIP/DWP.

#### **Cultural Activities:**

MFIP/DWP participants are not allowed to Participate in cultural activities as an employment activity.

#### **Child Support Non-Cooperation:**

MFIP/DWP child support sanction is 30%. The caretaker also loses medical eligibility.

#### **Employment Services Sanctions:**

MFIP/DWP participants can potentially face closure of their cash after six occurrences of Non-cooperation with employment services And child support.

#### **Family Cap:**

Family Cap applies to MFIP/DWP

#### **Education:**

One year is allowed for educational purposes under MFIP. DWP does not allow a participant to choose education.

### **IMPORTANT FOOD SUPPORT INFORMATION**

**ALL INCOME IS COUNTED AGAINST THE FOOD SUPPORT PROGRAM, INCLUDING TRIBAL**

**PAYMENTS/PER CAPITA, CHILD SUPPORT. FAMILIES NEED TO PLAN ACCORDINGLY TO MEET THEIR**

**MONTHLY FOOD NEEDS.**



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Background and Description**

### **of the Anukey Board Presentation Follow-up Charts and Tables**

During the Anukey Board Workshop on May 12, 2009, Board members requested additional information to compare measures by racial and ethnic groups and more detailed employment data. Specifically, they asked the Office of Performance Measurement & Evaluation to generate additional employment measures other than the percentage working one or more hours per month and to provide detailed comparisons for major racial and ethnic groups in all the measures. In response to those requests we have provided the additional charts and tables.

**Overview of the Charts and Tables.** The tables and charts show the annual rates by race for the five measures we reported at the workshop. Data sources vary in the number of categories used to report race. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) uses ten categories for client race, while WF1 data system uses five categories. We have included all race categories in the measure tables. On the companion charts for the measures, we have included only six race categories in order to make the charts more readable (African Americans, American Indians, Hmong, Hispanics/Latinos, Other Asian Immigrants, and Whites). Those six races were selected because they represent the largest proportion of MFIP participants, with the exception of American Indians, who were the focus of the analysis.

The pre-Anukey and Anukey periods should be considered when making longitudinal comparisons among the American Indian participants. The pre-Anukey period is from 2003 through September, 2006. The Anukey period began in October of 2006 when employment services job counselors began to work on-site at the American Indian Family Center. As a reminder, we have noted that change on all of the tables and charts.

**Interpreting the Charts and Tables.** The charts and tables show variations by year and race. Many of the race categories (Other Asian, Other Black, and Asian American) have fewer than 200 people in them. The American Indian population on MFIP is about one-tenth the size of the African American population on MFIP in Ramsey County. Those variations in population sizes should be considered when interpreting results. The various changes in MFIP policies and regulations also have affected the measures and need to be considered in interpreting longitudinal changes. Some of the information presented indicates an association between the operation of the Anukey Partnership and improvement in process and outcome measures for American Indian clients. However, these analyses do not rise to the more stringent standards of demonstrating a causal relationship between the actions of the program and the client outcomes. Finally, although the measures are presented here by the race of the clients there are many other characteristics and factors that may influence the measures such as number of children, education, marital status, stable housing, and age.

**Measure 1: MFIP Participants' Monthly Sanction Rate (Slides 1 & 2).** The monthly sanction rate is computed by dividing the number of sanctions in a month by the number of active MFIP participants in that same month. The annual average monthly sanction rate is then computed by adding the monthly sanction rates for a year and dividing that number by 12

(months). The annual average sanction rates for American Indians, African Americans, Latino/Hispanics, Whites, and Multi-racial participants show similar trends with relatively high sanction rates (6%-11%) in the last three years. Asian Americans have the highest sanction rate (13.3%) in the last year (2008). Across the years the sanction rates of Hmong and other Asian immigrants have remained the lowest (1%-4%) in comparison to other groups. Somalis and Other Black Immigrants also have relatively low sanction rates (2%-5%). In 2008 the American Indian's sanction rate fell below that of Whites, African Americans, Asian Americans and Latino/Hispanics.

**Measure 2a-c: MFIP Participants' Employment (Slides 3 to 8).** 'Employment' includes three measures: the average annual percentage of MFIP participants who are employed at all (one hour or more per month (2a)); the average annual percentage employed part-time or more (87 hours or more per month (2b)); and the average annual percentage employed full-time (130 hours or more per month (2c)). The African American, Latino/Hispanic and White MFIP participants' employment rates (employed at all, part-time or more and full-time) have similar trends over the years – increasing only slightly from 2003 to 2008. In contrast, American Indians have shown a steady increase in employment from 2004 to 2008, resulting in part-time (2b) and full-time (2c) employment rates close to the rate of Whites in 2008. The Hmong, Other Asian Immigrants, Somalis, and Other Black Immigrants have the highest part-time (2b) and full-time employment (2c) rates in 2007 and 2008.

**Measure 3: Median Monthly Income (Slides 9 & 10).** The annual average 'Median Monthly Income' is the annual sum of the median earned income for each month of active MFIP participation divided by the number of months in that year. The median monthly income for American Indians on MFIP has risen slowly over the years and since 2006 it has become close to the median income of African-American, Latino/Hispanic and White MFIP participants. Among MFIP participants, the Hmong and other Asian immigrants have consistently higher median income than all other racial groups; next in median income are Somalis and Other Black Immigrants.

**Measure 4: Leaving MFIP with Wages (Slides 11 & 12).** To be included in the computation of the 'Leaving MFIP with Wages', MFIP participants had to be off MFIP for three consecutive months and had to have earned income within those three months. Asian Americans are the highest percentage of MFIP participants who leave MFIP with wages. Whites, Latinos/Hispanic, and Other Black Immigrants have the next highest rate of leaving MFIP with wages. Somalis have the lowest percentage leaving MFIP with wages. The rate of American Indians leaving MFIP with wages was stable from 2003 to 2006 and then increased in 2007. African Americans showed small gains in leaving MFIP with wages from 2003 to 2008.

**Measure 5: Off MFIP or Working (Slides 13 & 14).** DHS created this measure and also calls it the "Self-Support Index". To be included in 'Off MFIP or Working', the participants had to be on MFIP three years prior and at the measurement time they had to be off the MFIP cash grant portion (but they could be on the food portion) or working full-time for three months (at least 130 hours per month). The racial groups with the highest percentages off MFIP or working three years later are Other Asian Immigrants, Asian Americans, Somalis, Other Black Immigrants, and Hmong. The percentages going off MFIP or working showed similar trends for

African Americans, Latino/Hispanics, and Whites – increases in 2006 and 2007 and remaining stable in 2008. The self-support index for American Indians showed no increase from 2005 to 2006, but increased in both 2007 and 2008.