

[Music]

Joe Torre:

Let's get started. Just as a reminder to our panelists, what we're hearing and what you're talking about is so important; but if we can we'd like to remind you to limit yourself to five minutes for your testimony. We're certainly not going to cut you off because it's too important and it's too emotional, but a little reminder, if we can do that we would appreciate it.

Life of a teenager in rural America: research indicates that youth in rural and tribal communities experience the same problems and similar levels of exposure to violence as their urban and suburban peers. However, rural youth more often encounter economic and physical barriers that prevent them from receiving adequate care and services necessary for healthy development.

Panelists will examine some of the challenges specific to youth in rural and tribal communities. Our panelist is Paul Smokowski, MSW, Ph.D., CP, and Director of the North Carolina Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention. In his role as Director Dr. Smokowski oversees the nation's first rural youth violence prevention center which serves Robeson County, one of the most ethnically diverse, rural counties in the country.

Dr. Smokowski is a professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, School of Social Work, and directs the school's Latino Cultural and Health Project. He co-authored *Becoming Bicultural: Risk, Resilience, and Latina Youth*.

Carole Justice, Coordinator of the Indian Country Methamphetamine Program. Ms. Justice (Northern Arapaho) has been involved in the development of service programs for children and youth as a social worker, educator, and prosecutor since 1972. In 1994 she became the Tribal Prosecutor for the Shoshoni and the Arapaho Tribes. In this role Ms. Justice guided and actively participated in the creation of the number of tribal programs in areas such as domestic violence and sexual assault, child and youth justice, and child mental health.

Since 2005 Ms. Justice has coordinated the Indian Country Methamphetamine initiative which has resulted in the creation of a dozen culturally based programs, strategies, and services for addressing methamphetamine and other addictions.

Nate Monson, Executive Director of Iowa Safe Schools. Iowa Safe Schools in partnership with the Iowa Civil Rights

Commission is a coalition of educators, civil rights, and LGBT advocates working to create safer schools and communities for LGBT youth through public awareness, education, and policy.

Since joining Iowa Safe Schools in 2007, Mr. Monson has developed the only proven, statewide training model for teachers, principals, parents, and youth-serving professionals regarding LGBT students. Let us start with Mr. Smokowski.

*Paul Smokowski:*

Thank you very much. I appreciate your invitation to speak to the Task Force. It's quite an honor. I'd like to begin as an academic saying that little research has been done on health-related risk factors for rural youth. Really more information is needed for the empirical database. A particular dearth of information exists for middle and high school youth. And particularly we have little information on the correlates of aggression and violence, delinquency in rural areas.

The extent of research we do have usually focuses on alcohol and drug use. And it is clear from those studies that rural adolescents are elevated risk for alcohol and drug use. Youth drinking increases at a faster rate in rural areas for youth compared to in suburban or urban areas for example. But we have little research devoted to aggressive behavior and delinquency. There are some highlights however.

In one longitudinal study (that's rare) deviant acts increase from 32 percent of rural youths reporting acts in sixth grade to 61 percent in 12th grade. And verbal harassment in the last 30 days was reported by over 60 percent of rural students. We also see prevalence rates of bullying and harassment comparable between urban and rural settings.

Now rural gang activity is a particularly important issue. It's not the prevalence. The prevalence is often lower but the intensity of the gang activity can be higher in rural settings. For example one important study has found that rural male gang members have reported fewer bonds to school, higher hard drug use, and more use of weapons and guns. Female gang members also report more drug use.

So what I would like to do is switch gears and talk with you about our response in North Carolina within one community. In 2010 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded our North Carolina Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention. We were funded in order to create a multi-tiered

service, a youth violence prevention initiative in Robeson County, North Carolina.

Like many rural areas Robeson County has been affected by the recession and with high poverty rates. In the year 2000 44 percent of Robeson County youth were living in poverty. The unemployment rate was 12 percent, but despite this adversity what we have found is that the community has a great deal of resilience in terms of dedicated service providers, ethnic identity within the Lumbee Tribe and cultural practices that go back generations and a willingness to make partnerships with the university in university-engaged research.

I'd like to make a few recommendations from our experience. First, we began with community-based needs assessments. What this did: we asked over 5,000 their perspective of what was happening in the community. We found out many different things and we were able to match evidence-based prevention programs to the particular concerns of youth in that community. But it was based on their reports that they told us.

We selected programs that had been effective in other places, but were tailored to the community context. We created universal prevention in middle school using the Positive Action Program and Students Against Violence Everywhere clubs for youth to be able to find anti-violence messages for the community.

We also made a critical relationship with the Health Department. Many health departments don't see youth violence prevention as part of their purview. They specialize in maternal and child health for example. But the Health Department in Robeson County engaged with us and is at the forefront of addressing this issue within a community-based coalition of agencies.

We linked programs from different service sectors so that there was a comprehensive safety net of prevention services. As I mentioned, we do universal prevention in schools. We created a team court program to divert first time offenders from the Juvenile Justice System and reengaged them into community service projects. We also sponsored parenting skills involvement in terms of the Parenting Wisely Program to help give parents new strategies for dealing with child behavior problems.

We recommend adding rigorous evaluation right along with implementation. The evaluations that we are doing are showing which programs are worthy of continue investment and difficult

budgetary times. And finally, as part of the CDC's ACE Network (Academic Centers of Excellence); these centers are in highest risk communities across the country addressing youth violence with comprehensive networks of services that bring providers together and address these issues in all of their complications.

We need complex answers to difficult problems. I hope that you will continue to support comprehensive initiatives like this. Thank you.

*Joe Torre:* Thank you Doctor. And we will have questions at the end of our three panelist's presentation. Ms. Justice.

*Carole Justice:* Thank you Joe Torre.

First I need to correct for the record. I am not Northern Arapaho. I am a servant of the Northern Arapaho Tribe and have had the privilege of working for them for the past sixteen years as a minority person on their nation and on the Wind River Indian Reservation, the home of the Eastern Shoshoni Tribe and the Northern Arapaho Tribe.

As a prosecutor I am here also to let you know that I hope my words adequately represent not the Northern Arapaho Tribe because they are my words, but of the dead children that I know and of those who are hurting today.

On the Wind River Indian Reservation which has one of the highest violence rates of reservations in the United States, violence is upfront and personal. It is also horrific. We are not talking about just mild violence. We are talking upfront, personal, and horrific. Trauma is daily.

Ivy, the speaker earlier, spoke eloquently of the historical trauma of her nation. And I can tell you that the trauma is not just historical as in 150 years ago with the Indian Wars in Wyoming but it is last week, this week, today, and tomorrow. We have lots of early death. The annual life expectancy is 49. It's up to 49. That's a good number.

When 40 percent of the Northern Arapaho tribal members are under the age of 18 and 50 percent are under the age of 24, you're having mid-life crisis at 25 because you only live until you're about 49. Early death is trauma and that is part of the violence. One newspaper from the reservation this last month had five obituaries, all under the age of 40. That's the reality.

Lack of safety robs children of their childhood. There's little childhood to defend. Numb is the norm. Survival is the goal. So think of children soldiers and think of the Indian Wars. They're going on today. And if you can't numb otherwise, you can numb through substance abuse.

Children, when they're interviewed (forensic interviews) all they want is, "Just make it stop." But they love their family. They belong to their family. They belong to their nation. The reservation is home. A tribe is an identity. It is not a racial minority. It is not a disparate minority. It is not an ethnic minority. It is a tribal nation. Its sovereignty and it needs the ability to be safe.

The children that I have come in contact with I've come in contact with in utero who have begun where the violence begins, not only because of the toxic mother but of the domestic violence to the pregnant woman. Healing does not happen in a society, in a home, in a person unless you feel safe. Otherwise you grow a scab. You hide the wound and you just keep going on.

Hope hurts. Don't give hope if you're not going to follow through because that's violence and that's trauma. When trust is broken – and Tom Pirelli's comments earlier today – This is a trust responsibility to Indian country. It is not just about grants. It is a trust responsibility to enable tribal leaders to protect their own people and their members.

They are not "others." If I have one goal in life it's to get that they are not "others." They are not statistically insignificant. And until that federal policy changes and state policy changes we will not see change in Indian country. They are people. They are the first Americans and they deserve that respect. You will hear from their leaders this afternoon and I hope that you open your heart to that message.

And they are all the same kids. The Child Protection System and the school systems are failing our kids. They are the shoots to where the Juvenile Justice System gets their children and where our prison systems get their children. What's it like to be a teen? I was asked to say that. Well first of all you've got housing insecurity. You've got sleeping insecurity because our households are so overcrowded. So you may not have the same bed every night because in Indian country your family is important and you take them in.

That's why HUD doesn't even count them as homeless, if they are under someone's roof. You wake in the morning to go to school. Well first you may not know where you're sleeping that night. And people live one place and stay the other. That's why in some ways. Also there is the violence. No one hears the screams. They're too isolated and far out.

Say you made it through the night. Now you get the challenge of getting to school. Over 40 – About 60 percent actually of our students never finish high school. Transportation: if you miss the bus you can't get to school. You may need to also help out with other family members, children. There may have been a car accident so now you've got to go with everyone to the hospital three hours away.

There may be ceremony that you need to participate in. So lots of lack of attendance? You betcha. Lack of interest? Maybe. And forget about after school guys. How are you going to get home? The only buses that run are for sports. And I can tell you, our biggest fights, and our most violent gang fights are around basketball games every year, so sports has a way of avoiding violence. I personally have a few issues with that, though it is a good way for recognition and for self-esteem in some cases.

Food insecurity: I would be remiss if I did not say this, but the USDA does not have to worry about our obesity factor. Most of our kids get two meals a day at school and now the school lunches have to comply with all these new regulations. I'm telling you, the cooks are telling me, "Tell them, hey guys, we need comfort food. We need food that has packs of nutritional content because they may not get a meal when they get home."

Child protection: that's pick them up and put them down, one judge said like puppies. Yes, we're proud of our kinship here but I heard earlier, Family Services – no, we need to change the words "Child Protection" to "Family Service."

Indian Country Meth Initiative is a solution. It's an initiative not a program. Government to government, some flexible funding, given from top administration to the tribes and it has had incredible affect, not only at Wind River but at other places. I'm getting an "I've got to stop." *[Laughter]*

By the way, in Indian country that's totally culturally inappropriate, but I know we're on a time table. Let me say this, the workers are back there. I get to come because they're too valuable. We have

not had a teen suicide at Wind River for six years because of those workers.

Recommendations: equality for tribal government and people begins with you. But, as a former Joe Torreman once said, "We can't wait for the federal government. The tribes know what to do." Give them the money and the resources like you give states. They are nations. They need \_\_\_\_\_ rates. They need to develop their own solutions. And I'll tell you, all of those who are saving those lives, not one of them has a college degree.

Let Indian country save its own. Thank you.

*Joe Torre:* Yes, that's okay. Let's hear it.

*[Applause]*

*Joe Torre:* Mr. Monson.

*Nate Monson:* Thank you all for having me here today and flying me out from the great state of Iowa where we're small but mighty. Iowa Safe Schools, we're a statewide organization that was founded back in 2002 in partnership with our state's Civil Rights Commission. They founded us because they kept hearing things around the state, things like teachers to, "Sit down fairy." Principals calling student fag. Kids who were just getting bullied relentlessly and beat up and everyone would just say, "We don't have a policy on the books. We don't have to do anything about it."

The Civil Rights Commission kind of took it up on their own to found us as a task force. We were initially called the LGBT Youth in Iowa Schools Task Force. That's a little lengthy so we shortened it just to Iowa SAFE Schools. We were founded to start a dialog in our state of what can we do to protect Iowa's LGBT students: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.

We know statistically, there was a recent Center for Disease Control and Prevention Report that came out and it identified -

*[Abrupt End of Audio]*

- Nate Monson:* this is taken seriously instead of just saying we do and we provide a bunch of money but then you don't really have to do anything with it.
- Dr. Mare:* Thank you.
- Chair:* Thank you. We have time for one more question. Bob it's yours.
- Bob:* Thank you Mr. Chairman. In the year of tight budgets, federal government has less money to provide for programming. What can you recommend to this Task Force that the federal government ought to be doing in the areas that you're working with to further the kinds of initiatives you've been discussing for us today?
- Paul Smokowski:* Well I made sure that the recommendations that I gave to the Task Force had budgetary requests of \$0.00, meaning that getting public health departments to have youth violence prevention on their radar costs nothing but would use a network that can be activated across the country. Doing needs assessments in schools costs very little but allows the school to be able to judge, "What is our problem with bullying? What is our problem with aggressive behavior in school?"
- So I think that it's more about – Another example of our experience with that: bringing together a coalition of community based providers who are passionate about youth violence prevention costs nothing. And they were there. They just needed a catalyst to facilitate them coming together. And like Carole mentioned, it's those folks who are in the field right now doing our youth violence prevention work. I just get to come and talk about it.
- I think that there are initiatives. These initiatives don't have to cost a great deal. It has to be where we're smart about how we use the limited funds that we have.
- Carole Justice:* Come to Indian country. We do more with less. The ICMI initiative funded ten tribes in the United States, three from SAMSA, seven for OMH funds for a while. We're talking monies like \$30,000.00, \$50,000.00, and \$100,000.00 a year. And I can tell you, I have never in my whole life seen money more well spent.
- Let the money not trickle down, just get there. Just give it and let them use it. That's how you save the money. And again, there are reports on ICMI, the flexible funding formula, that direct, "Here're

a few little caveats. This is all you have to do. Report back." Indian country did it and this is the same. You can do this in rural areas. You can do it with all sorts of things. Let's quite bureaucratizing these programs and these monies and let the grass root community organizations get the jobs done. Thank you.

*Nate Monson:*

You know I'd have to agree with a lot of what they both said. When it comes to assessments at schools or bringing together partners or letting community agencies do a lot. But when it comes to LGBT youth the biggest thing that I find is a lot of these kids are looking for a straight ally out there, like straight role models, people who are going to say, "It's okay and I'm okay with it. I'm not going to condemn you, and I'm going to stick up for you when other people do."

I know people don't – Like I've said before, people try to score political points off of the community at any cost. But it's really important that when appropriate, people do stick up for LGBT individuals. I know a lot of agencies in the Obama administration have done a lot with the *It Gets Better* campaign or different things like that. But instead of little videos, doing more and finds ways to reach out to the community I think could be huge for these LGBT kids to know that people, wherever they're at, they care about them.

That's one of the biggest issues with all the statics – all those issues. It's they don't think anyone cares. You know, the adults don't care about them. So if there are any ways that the federal government can do that and say, "We like LGBT people," that would be very nice.

*Chair:*

Well this is so powerful for me. Dr. Smokowski, Carole Justice, and Nate Monson: I think we should recognize this panel.

*[Applause]*

I'm sure we're going to hear the word "passionate" a number of times this afternoon but this certainly takes a back seat to no one. We're going to break for lunch now and reconvene at 1:00 pm.

*[Music]*

*[End of Audio]*

- Nate Monson:* this is taken seriously instead of just saying we do and we provide a bunch of money but then you don't really have to do anything with it.
- Dr. Mare:* Thank you.
- Chair:* Thank you. We have time for one more question. Bob it's yours.
- Bob:* Thank you Mr. Chairman. In the year of tight budgets, federal government has less money to provide for programming. What can you recommend to this Task Force that the federal government ought to be doing in the areas that you're working with to further the kinds of initiatives you've been discussing for us today?
- Paul Smokowski:* Well I made sure that the recommendations that I gave to the Task Force had budgetary requests of \$0.00, meaning that getting public health departments to have youth violence prevention on their radar costs nothing but would use a network that can be activated across the country. Doing needs assessments in schools costs very little but allows the school to be able to judge, "What is our problem with bullying? What is our problem with aggressive behavior in school?"
- So I think that it's more about – Another example of our experience with that: bringing together a coalition of community based providers who are passionate about youth violence prevention costs nothing. And they were there. They just needed a catalyst to facilitate them coming together. And like Carole mentioned, it's those folks who are in the field right now doing our youth violence prevention work. I just get to come and talk about it.
- I think that there are initiatives. These initiatives don't have to cost a great deal. It has to be where we're smart about how we use the limited funds that we have.
- Carole Justice:* Come to Indian country. We do more with less. The ICMI initiative funded ten tribes in the United States, three from SAMSA, seven for OMH funds for a while. We're talking monies like \$30,000.00, \$50,000.00, and \$100,000.00 a year. And I can tell you, I have never in my whole life seen money more well spent.
- Let the money not trickle down, just get there. Just give it and let them use it. That's how you save the money. And again, there are reports on ICMI, the flexible funding formula, that direct, "Here're

a few little caveats. This is all you have to do. Report back." Indian country did it and this is the same. You can do this in rural areas. You can do it with all sorts of things. Let's quite bureaucratizing these programs and these monies and let the grass root community organizations get the jobs done. Thank you.

*Nate Monson:*

You know I'd have to agree with a lot of what they both said. When it comes to assessments at schools or bringing together partners or letting community agencies do a lot. But when it comes to LGBT youth the biggest thing that I find is a lot of these kids are looking for a straight ally out there, like straight role models, people who are going to say, "It's okay and I'm okay with it. I'm not going to condemn you, and I'm going to stick up for you when other people do."

I know people don't – Like I've said before, people try to score political points off of the community at any cost. But it's really important that when appropriate, people do stick up for LGBT individuals. I know a lot of agencies in the Obama administration have done a lot with the *It Gets Better* campaign or different things like that. But instead of little videos, doing more and finds ways to reach out to the community I think could be huge for these LGBT kids to know that people, wherever they're at, they care about them.

That's one of the biggest issues with all the statics – all those issues. It's they don't think anyone cares. You know, the adults don't care about them. So if there are any ways that the federal government can do that and say, "We like LGBT people," that would be very nice.

*Chair:*

Well this is so powerful for me. Dr. Smokowski, Carole Justice, and Nate Monson: I think we should recognize this panel.

*[Applause]*

I'm sure we're going to hear the word "passionate" a number of times this afternoon but this certainly takes a back seat to no one. We're going to break for lunch now and reconvene at 1:00 pm.

*[Music]*

*[End of Audio]*

Nate Monson:

LGBT youth nationally are more likely for everything bad, every single thing bad we don't want for kids: sexual assault, dating violence, homelessness, bullying, harassment, suicide risk, bringing weapons to school, not feeling safe, and we could just keep going on, everything bad versus their heterosexual peers, except for one thing. My favorite tidbit was they were more likely to eat their vegetables than heterosexual students.

You've got to give them credit where credit's due. But what we've taken on as a call, in 2007 our state passed an anti-bullying law which has enumerated categories. That kind of policy has limited success at times because a law is only as good as the shelf it sits on. It's up to people to actually initiate it. It's actually up to the states for them to ensure that when schools report "no incidences of bullying" (10,000 in their enrollment and they're reporting nothing at all) that something happens instead of going, "Oh well zero's a number too." That's a number.

We have taken the approach of that policy, looking at it that way. We also do a lot of professional development and training opportunities through our training model. I don't believe in a one-shot deal, show up for an hour, and tell you to be nice to these kids. I know that's not going to change hearts and minds. What we try to give is a message and tools to educators and youth-serving professionals.

Something that I really take to heart is a quote from the play *The Laramie Project*. If you haven't seen *The Laramie Project* you need to go out and see it. It's the play that was done in the aftermath of the murder of Matthew Shepard who was a gay student at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. He was taken from a bar, tied up to a fence, beaten, and left for dead.

This group of playwrights from New York came out to Laramie and they interviewed local townspeople to find out what kind of town could grow up kids that would kill each other. And of course we find out through *The Laramie Project* that's it's Any Town, USA. It's Des Moines, Iowa. It's Albuquerque. It's anywhere. But at one point they go and they talk to the Catholic priest in town.

He said, "When you're called a fag or you're called a dyke, that's the seed of violence." That's the seed of violence right there. And I can just tell you in our rural communities the climate out there is that it's okay to say things like, "That's so gay." It's okay to call

each other fag. That's all okay. You're just a fag. You're just a dyke. You aren't my equal and I can treat you like crap. That's really what it's like for these kids. LGBT individuals – already we're not equals. We're not equals yet.

I can tell you we've made great advancements through Don't Ask – Don't Tell (having someone from the military here) but we're not equals yet and until we can get to that point it's going to be a long ways to go. So for us for recommendations it's including things like sexual orientation, gender identify on demographic surveys of students.

We know in Iowa we have a thing called the Iowa Youth Survey which is a great tool for sixth, eighth, and 11th grade students in all of the public schools, to survey them. But we don't ask the sexual orientation or gender identity question: do you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or unsure? Do you identify as male, female, or transgender, or don't know? That kind of data would really drive a lot of discussions.

That Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey I mentioned, that's all from places like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. schools. Those are the kinds of places that survey. But in our rural communities when I bring out, "Let's talk about the Iowa Youth Survey adding these questions," people get very afraid. And if you know anything about Iowa, we're one of only a handful states that has marriage equality.

So of course we've had the hammer of not very nice people come down on us. Policy makers are afraid. I can talk to people at the Department of Ed, Department of Public Health, I can talk to high level individuals who develop these surveys, and they will say upfront, "I can't add that question because I'm afraid I'll get fired."

Really we need to have these kinds of things asked because I can know anecdotally we have all these problems. I know nationally we have these surveys, but that's a big part of it. The other big thing is if there are any resources or funding to make sure the LGBT youth are included. I think this a population that oftentimes is forgotten about.

We don't ask the questions so we don't even ask. We don't even know demographically what's going on in a lot of rural areas. We know that – I could sit here all day and tell stories of kids getting bullied relentlessly, or sexual assault, or homeless being a big

issue. That in itself has become, especially in rural communities, a huge issue because if you're gay and you come out to mom and dad and say, "Mom, Dad, I'm gay." And they say, "No you're not," and then they kick you out? Where do you go? What do you do?

In rural communities you have sometimes these faith communities even who are not so nice, to put it lightly. And they will not accept the kids if they need support unless they will "pray the gay away" or something like that happens. It's a very big challenge because it's an issue that people have politicized.

Just last week – We host the Annual Governor's Conference on LGBTQ Youth. We get 500 Iowans together: kids, adults, people who just care. The audience is 90 percent straight. We make all the straight allies stand up and it's pretty cool to see. We had a switch in the administration in our Governor's office and weren't sure if we would get the support. Again, a not so nice group of people who compared LGBT to second hand smoke (they say it has the same health risks) started to send out press releases about it and started attacking the kids and saying how the Governor shouldn't support this.

We heard the Governor's not going to support it. Well thankfully yesterday, when I was actually flying here, I found out the Governor is supporting it, which I thought it was incredible to have that support, bipartisan support. It goes to show you that there are people out there who are so well organized on this issue that if you include LGBT in a policy discussion people don't want to hear it and they will shut you down. They will try to fire you. They will go after you.

I just want to thank you for having me here. I think it says a lot about where we've come, including LGBT on this panel because five years ago I think people would've been too afraid sometimes, oftentimes, to have that discussion. I really do want to thank you for having me.

*Joe Torre:*

Thank you Mr. Monson. Let's get right to questions okay? Questions? Go ahead.

*Sharon Cooper:*

If I could speak to you Mr. Monson. As a developmental pediatrician the last two or three lectures that I've given at developmental conferences have been about the alphabet soup of teen sexuality. I have found that pediatricians are extraordinarily receptive to learning more about how to help families because I

think we understand that if children are rejected by their own families, the incidences of depression and suicide is so much higher.

I really want to thank you for this initiative. Now I think, as a country, it's time to take that degree of sensitivity and acceptability to the school systems and I applaud you for what you are doing in Iowa. How would you recommend those of us in our Committee and our Task Force: what kinds of steps would you recommend from the standpoint of violence prevention against youth who are attending school specifically?

*Nate Monson:*

I think one of our biggest challenges is, in our state we had a 46 percent reduction in the number of school counselors across all the school districts. It was no longer a state mandate for a while to have a school counselor. You could have one in each district but if you have ten buildings it means nothing. Especially when we're talking about violence prevention I think those kinds of individual school counselors and school nurses are on the front lines.

They're the ones that can bring those programs home, those prevention things in a school building and are kind of more receptive to those ideas. You know, school environments can't just be about all those academics. It's that safe, supportive, nurturing environment. The school counselor issue is huge. The school nurse issue is huge. Providing more professional development and training: most educators aren't –

In Iowa we have a thing that all educators have to take just one time in their life, which is a Human Relations class at a college. It's only one semester long and they have to fit in everything diversity related that you can image, which of course means that you have no time to talk about anything. Having more requirements for educators under Human Relations or school climate kinds of issues I think would be huge.

Because then they could understand and be able to see those signs if a kids homeless, if a kid was maybe just sexually assaulted. They can have those conversations better of know of local resources.

*Joe Torre:*

This one down here.

*Georgina Mendoza:*

Thank you. I want to thank all three of you for your passionate testimony. I think it's something that's really food for thought for

all of us here. Dr. Smokowski, I did have some questions regarding some of the work that you're doing with the rural gang youth. I appreciated your comments about the necessity of having a comprehensive approach and of bringing all the relative stakeholders together. And I also appreciated the fact that you said youth is one of those critical components or stakeholders to work within the collaborative.

However you also stated that rural youth involved in gangs tend to have less connection with the schools or other social services than their urban counterparts. So how is it that we can bring in the rural gang youth into the conversation and at the same time strengthen the bonds with, for example, schools?

*Paul Smokowski:* That's a very good question and that's why, like others this morning, we've been stressing collaboration across service systems. So let me give you an example. Unfortunately we start to see some of these gang involved youth in our teen court program. I had mentioned the teen court program diverts youth from the Juvenile Justice System and tries to reengage them into community service projects.

When we have gang members who come through, it's at that point that we can then hook them back into our universal initiatives in school. I had mentioned that they tend to be less connected but we can try to reconnect them to our Students Against Violence Everywhere Clubs or our Positive Action Program. That is how we're trying to make the sectors work together.

*Joe Torre:* Chief – Chief \_\_\_\_\_.

*Chief:* Thank you very much. And thank you all for participating, and educating us today on the issue we're talking about. Dr. Smokowski you answered part of the question that I was going to ask. But one piece of that if you would: what do you see as your recidivism rates with the teen court versus going the way that you did previously?

*Paul Smokowski:* Yes, that's a great question. We are evaluating as we go along. This is our first year of putting the teen court program into place. We'll evaluate it for the next four years and then work on sustainability. But other teen court programs have shown decreasing recidivism by half. So they've been quite effective in terms of reengaging youth into the community and keeping youth out of the Juvenile Justice system. The teen court programs, in

terms of budgetary constraints, are actually quite cheap (if you allow it to say it that way and not in an academic way) and much cheaper than many other Juvenile Justice responses.

*Joe Torre:* Dr. James?

*Dr. James:* Thank you to all of you for your very, very powerful testimony today. My question is for Ms. Justice. Ms. Justice, much of the information in the facts that you stated today is astonishing and gut wrenching actually to hear it, particularly a life expectancy of 49 percent in the United States. But I have question for you. At the end, you gave us some very powerful sort of take home points. What I would like to ask you is if you could identify three action/needs that you could identify that would help to begin the process of affecting change.

*Carole Justice:* Thank you. Thank you for the question. And thank you again for being here. Get out of the silos. The feds are all in silos. The states are all in silos, and that creates silos on tribal lands. Indian Country Meth Initiative's flexible funding formula gave money directly government to government and let tribal leaders decide how to spend that money. That's critical.

We need block grants, lack of silos, and a trans-disciplinary approach to handling the issue; not multi-disciplinary, not inner-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary. The difference is you have a common vision. It's one child and everybody works together in order to be able to provide the services. Nobody stands apart. In that way, trans-disciplinary is perfectly tribal.

Secondly, prevention through intervention: you cannot prevent trauma and violence. I'm sorry guys, you just can't. 9/11 should've taught America that. But you can create better coping mechanisms. And on the reservation that coping mechanism is the culture. So it has to be culturally-based approaches for each native community, as Ivy was (I believe) saying. They have to decide those approaches themselves.

We do not have a homogenous reservation, which makes Wind River very unique. We have 13 tribes on that reservation, from the last census, represented, and two tribes who are totally sovereign nations. So you have to learn what is culture, not just the cultural identity speak stuff. But you have to really allow cultural interventions that are community based and community driven in order to be able to begin to address it.

And finally, you have to rethink: what's a kid? What's a child? Our teens are our mothers and our fathers. Yes they need to grow up and develop as children but they have to be respected that they may have been taking care of the substance abusing parent since they were four. We have to respect what they can do as well as what they can become and give them the tools so that the stars come back in their eyes.

The American dream is alive on the reservation but the dream is for the family. There are no individuals. When you go off to school you get a tool that you bring back, hopefully. Thank you.

*Joe Torre:* Steven Marans.

*Steven Marans:* This is a question for all three of the panelist or whoever would like to respond and help teach me better. In each of your statements, what's implicit is your deep experience in the areas of the work that you're involved in. And what was implicit, if not explicit, is a question that came to my mind which is: how receptive have you found the federal partners with whom you've worked to the findings and the incredible wealth of knowledge that you've accrued as a result of your experience?

And the second part of this, so that it's not just either a praise or criticism fest: what would you recommend in terms of increasing the receptivity and the feedback in terms of knowledge? Just as one example, Mr. Monson in your description of the simple screening approach and the politicization of that screening approach – these are federal dollars. It doesn't seem to be rocket science, but I'm not very political.

The idea would be federal dollars says you do it – If you want the money you do it the way we do it. These have implications, as each of you have suggested, not only to identifying the phenomena but as a first step to identifying solutions. If you could say something about what you would recommend in terms of increased receptivity and use of what you've learned and what you've presented today, that would be helpful.

*Paul Smokowski:* I'd like to just start with an answer, in terms of your first piece about the work that we do with federal partners and I'd like to make sure that I say: our partnership began with the Centers for Disease Control, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, and they've provided us with two program officers that we

talk to every two weeks about how the project is going. Those project officers have been to Robeson County. They have engaged with our community based coalition. They've met the judges that work at our teen court program.

So we have had a very close involvement with our federal funders, not just to monitor the funds and to see that we're on track, but to create this community based comprehensive initiative together.

*Carole Justice:*

Thank you again for that question. We have had great success in gaining critical federal grants and we are so grateful (and we need plenty more). But federal partners' willingness: I think the best way of explaining that is from the current Vice-Joe Torrewoman or the National Congress of American Indians. I learned a little term from her years ago about people listening with their ears painted on.

I guess that's the best way I can say it. Paul here has mentioned the idea of coming out and seeing. That's critical. And I'll tell you, those Federal Program Officers aren't allowed to come out and see anymore. You can't understand – You can't understand. We talk about, we laugh about, "Yeah we'd like to get out there and Crocodile Dundee one of those one time." You know, just drop them off, and let them experience the rez. "Oh yeah, you go thata way," and walk your way to the Program Office and find out what it's like.

I think that just the lack of awareness – It's not that the sympathy isn't there. It's not that the empathy isn't there. It's not that the willingness to help isn't there, but it is truly not understanding. Then the other is, for heaven's sake, I've been doing this work since 1973 when Richard Nixon had the LEAA Program, and I can tell you – We always said, "Replicate. Do your program so it will be replicated." For God's sake, start replicating.

You get the grants. You work your buns off and then it's like, "Great program. Now you've got to apply for another grant and call it something else next year." We have great programs. Paul's identified them. Nate's identified them. Everybody in this room's identified them. Replicate and fund promising programs. Fund the ones that work. Thank you.

*Nate Monson:*

For us, obviously we work more with the Department of Education if anyone, and usually the Office of Civil Rights when it comes to bullying. They've made it a priority, but it's kind of – As you

mentioned, with the funding, like this federal funding shouldn't be politicized. The U.S. Department of Education had a bunch of safe and supportive dollars that they started distributing with bullying money. It's supposed to be for school climate. A big part of it is bullying and harassment issues.

That was the money they had. We serve on a couple of boards with them and work with our partners there but that's been our problem. We get the answer from the U.S. Department of Ed, "Yes LGBT issues are important, and bullying issues are important." You're starting to hear that more.

But then when the dollars come out, the states don't have to follow through with it, because, "I'm too afraid that I'm going to get fired by my conservative boss." That's what it comes down to. And so if there were some kind of tinge added to that I think that would just – That would send the clear signal that -

*[Abrupt End of Audio]*