



Washington State Health Care Authority  
**Office of Tribal Affairs**

# WA State Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Taskforce

During the 2024 Washington State Legislative Session, funding was allocated in [ESSB-5950, Section \(145\)\(a\)](#) to establish the Washington State Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Taskforce and appropriated to the [American Indian Health Commission \(AIHC\)](#). AIHC is a non-profit organization in the state that focuses on the health of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) with an expressed mission to improve the health and cultural well-being of AI/AN and shape a collective Tribal voice on health equity priorities.

## Background

The negative impact of colonization has created significant hardship in the health and wellness of Tribal Nations. These issues persist to this day and worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of particular concern is the disproportionate high rates of fatal and non-fatal opioid poisonings within Native communities, representing a health disparity that is above the national average. During the 2022 Centennial Accord, Tribes called upon Governor Inslee to act and combat the opioid/fentanyl public health crisis that disproportionately affects the state's Native communities. As a result, there was a call to action to create the WA State Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Summit to address the opioid crisis within Native communities in Washington state.

## Members

The Washington State Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Taskforce includes representatives from each of the 29 federally recognized Tribes in Washington state, both Urban Indian Health Programs (UIHP), two Native individuals with lived experience, four state legislators, and representatives from various state agencies, city, and county.

HCA's Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) supports AIHC in the development, planning, and coordination of the Taskforce meetings and yearly summits.

- **Meeting and Frequency:** Meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday quarterly.
- **Leadership:** Co-chaired by one legislative member and four Tribal leaders.

## Tasks and Objectives

Key responsibilities, as outlined in the proviso [ESSB-5950](#), include reviewing laws and polices relating to illicit sale and use of opioids and

fentanyl, jurisdictional authority, Tribal exclusionary authority, and any related impacts affecting AI/AN in the following five priority areas:

1. Public Safety and Justice
2. Continuum of Care
3. Housing and Wraparound Services
4. Family and Community Services
5. Community Response

The Taskforce developed recommendations that include legislative and executive policy changes and budget initiatives for the purpose of addressing the priority areas gathered from the [2023](#), [2024](#), and [2025](#) Annual WA Tribal Opioid & Fentanyl Summits.

In 2025, the Taskforce submitted a [Legislative Report](#) that details initial findings, progress of the meetings, and recommendations gathered. Findings include but are not limited to proposed new statutes or amendment of current statutes, executive branch action items or regulatory changes, and funding and budget requests.

## Taskforce Subcommittees

The Taskforce established subcommittees for the priority areas and utilized already existing Tribal meetings. Subcommittees meet monthly, chaired by a Tribal leader, and co-chaired by a representative from a state agency. Meeting material can be found at AIHC's website:

- [Washington State Tribal Opioid and Fentanyl Taskforce](#)
- Public Safety and Justice: [Public Safety and the Justice System](#)
- Continuum of Care: [AI/AN Opioid Response Workgroup \(ORW\)](#)
- Housing and Wraparound Services: [GTLSSC Tribal Housing and Wraparound Services Workgroup](#)
- Family and Community Services: [Tribal Opioid/Fentanyl Prevention Education Awareness Campaign Workgroup](#)
- Community Response: [AIHC Current Issues in Public Health and Emergency Response](#)

## For more information

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[WA Tribal Health Meeting Schedule 2026](#)