
AUGUST 2023

Empowering Native Families

A Youth Cannabis Prevention Toolkit for Native American Parents



Developed by: Cheyenne Chee



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

This product is developed by Cheyenne Chee under the 2022-2023 Mountain Plains Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) Fellowship Program. The Mountain Plains PTTC and this program are supported by SAMHSA of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by SAMHSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government. SAMHSA Cooperative Agreement #5H79SP081020-05



Land Acknowledgement: The Mountain Plains PTTC acknowledges that we are all on the traditional lands of native people. In Utah, we work from the ancestral lands of 5 major Native tribes: Ute, Dine' (Navajo), Paiute, Goshute, and Shoshone. We have a responsibility to acknowledge our Indigenous connections and the histories of Indigenous land dispossession. We encourage you to learn more about the stewards of the land you live and work on by working with your native neighbors, and by visiting <https://native-land.ca/>



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Empowering Native Families

A Youth Cannabis Prevention Toolkit for Native American Parents

Table of Contents

- I. Page 4 **Introduction**
- II. Page 5-7 **Understanding Cannabis: Key Facts and Impact on Youth**
- III. Page 8-10 **Talking to Your Child about Cannabis**
- IV. Page 11-14 **Recognizing Warning Signs and Risk Factors**
- V. Page 15-17 **Creating a Healthy Environment**
- VI. Page 18-19 **Navigating the PTTC Network and Gray Matters Campaign**
- VII. Page 20 **Additional Resources**
- VIII. Page 21 **References**
- IX. Page 22 **About the Author**



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Introduction

This toolkit is designed to provide Native American parents/guardians with valuable resources and information to prevent cannabis use among youth. By utilizing the PTTC Network and Gray Matters campaign as primary resources, this toolkit aims to empower parents/guardians in promoting healthy choices and supporting their children's well-being. Additional relevant resources are also included to enhance the effectiveness of prevention efforts.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Understanding Cannabis

Overview

Cannabis, commonly known as marijuana, is a psychoactive drug derived from the Cannabis plant. It has been used for various purposes, including recreational and medicinal, for thousands of years. However, it's essential to understand the effects and potential risks associated with cannabis use, particularly among youth.

Effects of Cannabis

Short Term	Long Term
1. Euphoria and relaxation: Cannabis can induce a sense of euphoria and relaxation, often leading to feelings of happiness and calmness.	1. Cognitive function: Prolonged cannabis use during adolescence may impact cognitive function, including memory, attention, and learning.
2. Altered perception: Cannabis may distort sensory perceptions, such as time perception and sensory experiences.	2. Mental health: Some studies suggest a correlation between cannabis use and an increased risk of mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and psychosis.
3. Impaired coordination and judgment: Cannabis use can impair motor skills, coordination, and decision-making abilities.	3. Respiratory health: Frequent smoking of cannabis, particularly in unfiltered forms, can lead to respiratory problems like those caused by tobacco smoking.
4. Increased heart rate: Consumption of cannabis can elevate heart rate	

Understanding Cannabis

Potential Risks for Native American Youth

1. Academic Performance

Academic performance: Cannabis use during adolescence can impact educational achievement, potentially hindering opportunities for Native American youth.

2. Substance Use

Early cannabis use may increase the risk of substance abuse disorders later in life.

3. Health Disparities

Native American youth already face significant health disparities, and cannabis use can exacerbate these issues.

4. Legal Consequences

Cannabis use remains illegal under federal law, and legal implications can affect Native American youth differently depending on tribal and state jurisdiction.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

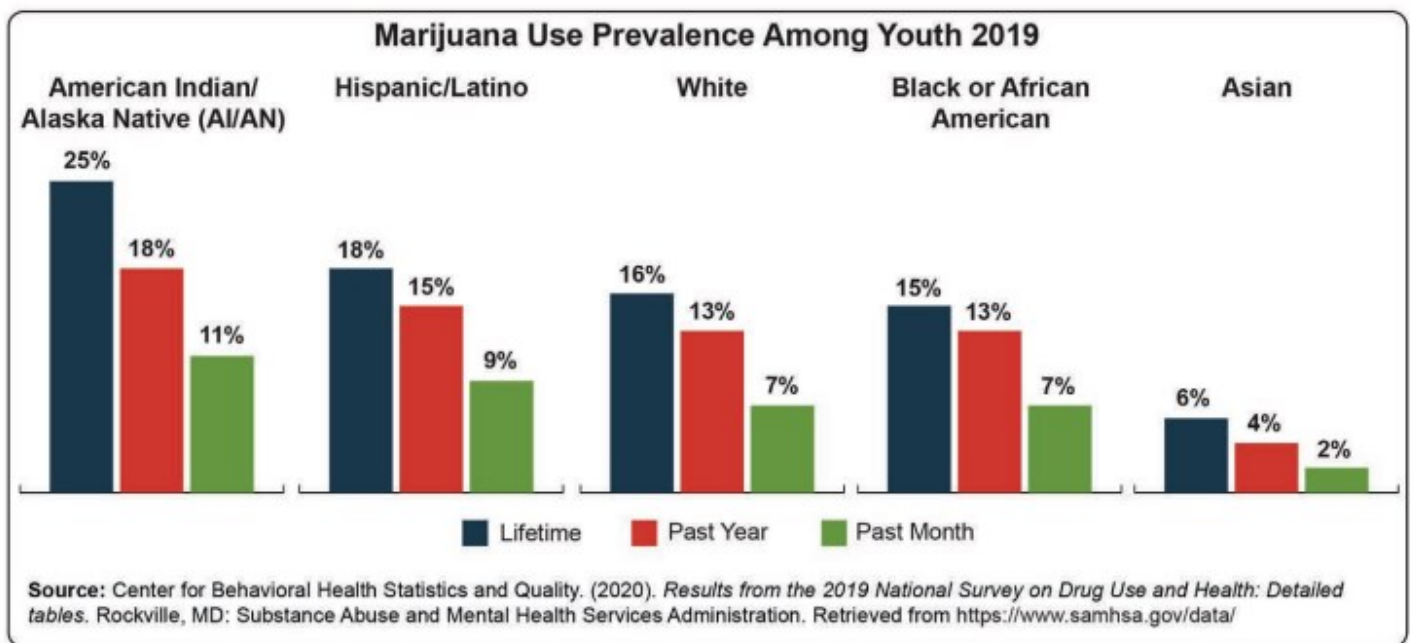
PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Understanding Cannabis

Statistics & Research Findings

Statistics on cannabis use among Native American youth specifically are limited. However, research indicates that Native American youth have **higher rates** of substance abuse, including cannabis use, compared to other ethnic groups (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019).



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Talking to Your Child About Cannabis

Tips and Strategies for Initiating Conversations About Cannabis Use



Create a safe and non-judgmental environment: Establish trust and confidentiality to encourage open dialogue about cannabis use.



Active listening: Give undivided attention and show empathy to understand the perspectives and experiences of the individual you're conversing with.



Use open-ended questions: Encourage discussion by asking questions that require more than simple "yes" or "no" answers.



Share accurate information: Provide reliable and evidence-based information about cannabis, its effects, and potential risks tailored to the individual's age and cultural background.



Focus on personal and community well-being: Highlight the potential impact of cannabis use on physical health, mental health, academic performance, and cultural identity.



Respect cultural beliefs and values: Acknowledge and incorporate Native American cultural perspectives, practices, and traditional values related to health and well-being.

Talking to Your Child About Cannabis

Age-Appropriate Communication Techniques

Early childhood (ages 5-12):

- Use age-appropriate language and simple explanations.
- Emphasize the importance of making healthy choices, taking care of one's body, and following cultural teachings.
- Incorporate storytelling and cultural activities to engage children in learning about traditional values and healthy lifestyles.

Adolescence (ages 13-17):

- Encourage critical thinking and self-reflection by discussing the potential consequences and risks of cannabis use.
- Discuss peer pressure and strategies for resisting it.
- Promote healthy coping mechanisms, stress management techniques, and alternative activities to engage in instead of using cannabis.

Young adulthood (ages 18-25):

- Foster discussions on personal goals, career aspirations, and how cannabis use may impact them.
- Explore the potential legal and employment ramifications of cannabis use.
- Provide information on harm reduction strategies and resources for seeking support or treatment if needed.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Talking to Your Child About Cannabis

Addressing Cultural Considerations & Values

Engage with tribal leaders and cultural experts:

Seek guidance from Native American tribal leaders, elders, and cultural experts to understand cultural protocols, beliefs, and practices related to substance use.

Incorporate traditional teachings: Discuss the importance of cultural identity, traditional values, and spiritual well-being in relation to making healthy choices.

Cultural events and ceremonies: Utilize cultural events, ceremonies, or gatherings to create platforms for discussions on substance use, health, and well-being within the context of Native American culture.

Utilize culturally-relevant resources:

Draw upon culturally-tailored prevention programs, resources, and materials that specifically address substance use prevention in Native American communities, such as those provided by the Gray Matters campaign and the PTTC.



Remember that cultural considerations may vary among different Native American tribes and communities. It is essential to work closely with local community leaders and cultural experts to ensure culturally appropriate approaches to discussions on cannabis use.

Recognizing Warning Signs and Risk Factors

Identifying Signs of Cannabis Use in Youth

Identifying signs of cannabis use in Native American youth is crucial for early intervention and prevention efforts. While it's important to note that individuals may exhibit different signs, some common indicators of cannabis use among Native American youth include:

Changes in Behavior

- Sudden mood swings or extreme changes in temperament.
- Unexplained changes in motivation or lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities.
- Increased secrecy, withdrawal from family and friends, or a change in social circles.
- Decreased academic performance, skipping classes, or a decline in school engagement.

Physical Signs

- Bloodshot or red eyes, especially when not associated with other eye conditions.
- An uncharacteristic odor, often described as a strong, sweet scent, on clothing, hair, or breath.
- Changes in appetite, such as increased hunger ("the munchies") or sudden weight loss.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Recognizing Warning Signs and Risk Factors

Identifying Signs of Cannabis Use in Youth

Cognitive & Emotional Changes

- Impaired memory or difficulty concentrating on tasks.
- Heightened anxiety, paranoia, or feelings of unease.
- Disrupted sleep patterns, such as difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.

Neglecting Responsibilities

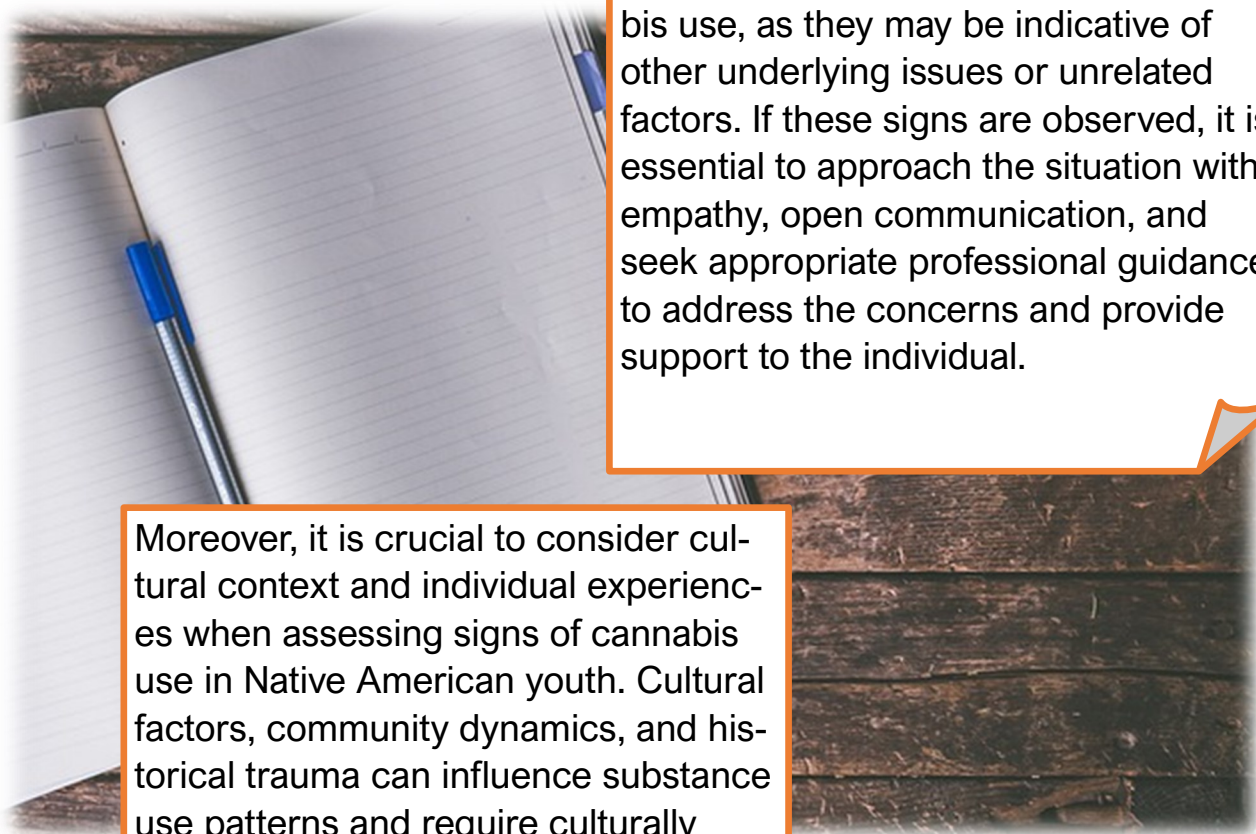
- Neglecting personal hygiene and grooming habits.
- Declining performance in school or work responsibilities.
- Increased absenteeism or tardiness.

Possession of Paraphernalia

- Discovery of items such as rolling papers, pipes, bongs, or vaporizers.
- The presence of small plastic bags or containers used for storing cannabis.

Recognizing Warning Signs and Risk Factors

Identifying Signs of Cannabis Use in Youth



It's important to remember that these signs are not definitive proof of cannabis use, as they may be indicative of other underlying issues or unrelated factors. If these signs are observed, it is essential to approach the situation with empathy, open communication, and seek appropriate professional guidance to address the concerns and provide support to the individual.

Moreover, it is crucial to consider cultural context and individual experiences when assessing signs of cannabis use in Native American youth. Cultural factors, community dynamics, and historical trauma can influence substance use patterns and require culturally sensitive approaches in prevention and intervention efforts.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Recognizing Warning Signs and Risk Factors

Understanding Risk Factors Associated with Cannabis Use

Risk factors contribute to an individual's susceptibility to initiating cannabis use. Several risk factors have been identified in relation to cannabis initiation in the Native American population:

- **Peer Influence:** Peer pressure and social norms that normalize cannabis use can increase the likelihood of initiation. The influence of friends and peers who use cannabis can be a significant risk factor.
- **Cultural and Historical Factors:** Historical trauma, disconnection from traditional cultural practices, and acculturation stress can contribute to increased vulnerability to substance use, including cannabis initiation.
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):** Exposure to childhood trauma, neglect, abuse, or dysfunctional family environments can increase the likelihood of early substance use initiation, including cannabis.
- **Availability and Access:** Easy availability and accessibility to cannabis, including illegal markets, can heighten the risk of initiation, especially in areas where legal regulations are less stringent.
- **Co-Occurring Substance Use:** The use of other substances, such as tobacco or alcohol, can increase the risk of cannabis initiation and subsequent substance use disorders.



Creating a Healthy Environment

Promoting Protective Factors Within the Family & Community

Cultural Identity and Heritage: Emphasize the importance of preserving and embracing Native American cultural identity and heritage. Encouraging pride in their roots can foster a sense of belonging and resilience, serving as a protective factor against cannabis use.

Community Support Systems: Strengthen community support systems that provide assistance and resources to individuals and families. This can include support groups, counseling services, and mentorship programs that help individuals navigate challenges and build resilience.

Family Connectedness: Foster strong family bonds by promoting open communication, empathy, and understanding. Engage families in activities that strengthen relationships and create a supportive and nurturing environment.

What is a protective factor?

A protective factor refers to any characteristic, condition, or attribute that reduces the likelihood of an individual or a group facing negative outcomes or developing certain problems.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Creating a Healthy Environment

Building Strong Relationships & Fostering Open Communication

HOW?



Community Engagement: Facilitate community events, workshops, and gatherings that encourage interaction among community members. By fostering a sense of togetherness, individuals are more likely to seek support and share concerns openly.

Mentorship Programs: Implement mentorship programs that connect youth with positive role models from within the community. Mentors can offer guidance, support, and motivation to steer youth away from substance use.

Communication Skills Training: Provide training and workshops on effective communication skills, both within families and the broader community. Improved communication can strengthen relationships and help address potential issues before they escalate.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Creating a Healthy Environment

Encouraging Positive Peer Influences

Peer Education Programs: Engage youth in peer education initiatives that focus on the dangers of cannabis use and promote healthy lifestyle choices. Empowering youth to lead such programs can create a positive impact on their peers.



Recreational and Educational Activities:

Organize recreational and educational activities that provide alternatives to substance use. By offering engaging and fulfilling activities, we can reduce the appeal of cannabis use.

Positive Social Norms: Promote positive social norms that discourage cannabis use and celebrate healthy behaviors within the community. Highlighting examples of individuals who have made positive choices can influence others to follow suit.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Navigating the PTTC Network and Gray Matters Campaign

Introduction to the Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC) Network

Transfer Center (PTTC) Network

The PTTC Network is a valuable resource hub that aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of substance abuse prevention efforts. It comprises a network of regional centers that provide training, technical assistance, and resources to prevention professionals and community members.

To navigate the PTTC Network:

Visit the PTTC Network Website

(www.pttcnetwork.org): Access the PTTC Network website to explore the available resources and services.



Locate the Regional PTTC Center:

Identify the PTTC center that serves your specific region or community. Each regional center tailors its services to address the unique needs of local communities, including Native American communities.

Access Training and Resources:

Explore the training opportunities, webinars, workshops, and online resources offered by the PTTC Network. Look for content specifically tailored to Native American communities for culturally appropriate prevention strategies.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Navigating the PTTC Network and Gray Matters Campaign

Overview & Access to the Gray Matters Campaign materials:

The Gray Matters campaign is an initiative dedicated to preventing cannabis use among young adults. Their resources are evidence-based and aim to raise awareness of the potential risks associated with cannabis use.

To access and utilize Gray Matters materials:

Visit the Gray Matters Campaign Website: Explore the campaign's website to access educational materials, videos, infographics, and other resources.

Share Campaign Materials: Utilize the campaign materials, such as posters and social media graphics, to raise awareness among Native American youth and young adults about the potential harms of cannabis use.

Collaborate with Gray Matters: Reach out to the Gray Matters campaign to explore opportunities for collaboration and customizing materials to better suit the needs of Native American communities.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Additional Resources

Links to websites, publications, and tools related to cannabis prevention and Native American communities:

- **Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse | SAMHSA:** <https://www.samhsa.gov/tribal-affairs/oiasa>
- **American Indian: Substance Misuse Prevention with New England Native Populations Toolkit:** <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-pttc/2021-fellowship-program-product-american-indian-substance-misuse>
- **Gathering of Native Americans Curriculum:** <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/gathering-native-americans-gona-substance-abuse-prevention>
- **Tribal Community Resources:** <https://ncsacw.acf.hhs.gov/topics/tribal.aspx>
- **PTTC - American Indian Substance Misuse/Abuse Prevention Resources:** <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/mountain-plains-pttc/american-indian-substance-misuseabuse-prevention-resources>

Regional organizations and support networks for further assistance:

- **Gray Matter's Campaign:** <https://graymattersutah.org/>
- **National American Indian & Alaska Native PTTC:** <https://pttcnetwork.org/centers/content/national-american-indian-alaska-native-pttc>
- **PTTC Network:** <https://pttcnetwork.org/>



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

References

- 1 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2019). Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- 2 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2020). Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- 3 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2021). Native Connections. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/native-connections>
- 4 Indian Health Service. (2021). Cultural Awareness: Traditional Healing Practices. Retrieved from <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/traditionalhealingpractices/>
- 5 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). "Preventing Marijuana Use Among Youth." Publication No. PEP21-06-01-001 Released 2021. https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/SAMHSA_Digital_Download/PEP21-06-01-001.pdf
- 6 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Marijuana Health Effects: Lung Health." <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/lung-health.html>
- 7 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Marijuana Health Effects: Brain Health." <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/brain-health.html>
- 8 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Marijuana Health Effects: Mental Health." <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/mental-health.html>
- 9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Marijuana Health Effects: Addiction." <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/addiction.html>
- 10 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "Marijuana Health Effects: Driving." <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/driving.html>
- 11 Gray Matters - Let's be blunt about underage marijuana misuse. (2022). Gray Matters. <https://graymattersutah.org/>

Note: This toolkit should be regularly updated to incorporate the latest research, resources, and community-specific information to ensure its ongoing relevance and effectiveness.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

About the Author



Cheyenne Chee

MP-PTTC Fellow

Cheyenne Chee is a Navajo graduate student at Utah State University. She is Bit’ahnii, born for Naakai Dine’e. Her maternal grandfather is Ashiihi, and her paternal grandfather’s clan is Kinyaa’aani. She will graduate with her Master of Public Health degree in December 2024. Cheyenne is a public health professional dedicated to improving the overall wellbeing of her Native American people. Cheyenne is grateful to PTTC and her mentor, Heidi Dutson (the Prevention Administrator for the Utah Department of Health & Human Services) for starting her career in prevention.

Cheyenne also loves fishing, yoga, and reading. She lives in Utah with her fiancée and two lééchaq’í (dogs).



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration