The Colville Confederated Tribes Child Restraint Law Development

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BACKGROUND

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for American Indian children. Proper use of child safety seats can substantially reduce fatal injuries. Primary laws have been an effective way to increase seat belt and child safety seat use.

The Colville Confederated Tribes is a land based tribe, comprised of four districts, in Washington State. As a sovereign nation the tribe is not subject to state laws. The tribe may adopt the state law, have no law, or enact its own seat belt and child passenger safety law. Currently the tribe has a primary seat belt law but it does not require child safety seats. Drivers may be stopped and cited if a child is not using any restraint, but drivers cannot be cited for not using a child safety seat.

METHODS

- Conducted observational surveys & driver interviews in four districts of the Colville reservation plus an adjacent community site off-reservation
- Interviewed community members to discern factors relevant to child passenger restraint use
- Developed a community intervention plan to increase child passenger safety
- Intervention plans were reviewed by community focus groups, refined, and implemented

RESULTS

- On reservation in 2009, child safety seat use ranged from 19% to 62% by district
- Proper restraint was higher (80%) where drivers were subject to Washington State law which requires booster seats until age 8
- Elicitation interviews indicated that a ticket would motivate people to use child safety seats

INTerventions

- Designed community interventions including developing a law & order code that amends the primary law to include child safety seats
- Developed a diversion program to complement the child restraint law

DOWN THE ROAD

- The law amendment will be proposed to Colville Tribal Council and is expected to pass
- Child safety seat use will be evaluated in spring 2011 & spring 2013 to determine the effectiveness of community interventions, including the law amendment

Funding and Partnership

The Native CARS study is a 5-year research study funded by the National Institutes of Health’s Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities and is a partnership with the NPAIHB, the University of Washington, and six Northwest tribes. This partnership aims to design and evaluate interventions to improve child safety seat use in tribal communities.
