

Center for Health Equity Research

**Southwest Health Equity Research Collaborative
PILOT PROJECT PROGRAM**

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Project Title: *Parents Taking Action to Improve Autism Services Access for Navajo Families in Northern Arizona: Intervention Adaptation and Pilot Trial*

Proposal Abstract:

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a complex, neurodevelopmental disability that affects many US children. ASD often necessitates the use of many services to optimize health. Profound racial and ethnic disparities exist in access to ASD services and have been established for children who are Latinx, African American or Black, and American Indian or Alaska Native (AI/AN). Coconino County has an estimated 39,478 (28.5%) individuals who are AI/AN including 32,472 who are Navajo. Little is known, however, about Navajo parent/guardian experiences raising children with ASD and service access barriers. Moreover, no intervention to reduce health disparities has targeted Navajo families of children with ASD. A critical need, therefore, exists to generate new knowledge on Navajo parent/guardian perceptions of ASD that can inform an intervention to improve service access. The proposed mixed-methods study will aim to: (1a) Conduct focus groups and interviews with Navajo parents/guardians of children with ASD in year 1 to generate new knowledge on Navajo parent/guardian experiences raising children with ASD; (1b) Adapt Parents Taking Action, an evidence-based intervention, for Navajo families of children with ASD in year 1; and (2) Conduct a pilot trial of the adapted intervention with 10 Navajo parents/guardians of children with ASD ages 2-12 years to determine its feasibility, acceptability, and culturally appropriate outcomes measurement in year 2. This research will help to advance health equity for Navajo families of children with ASD, and the adapted intervention can potentially be spread to more Navajo families and other tribal and/or rural communities.