



Grade Level: HS  
Subject: Health

# Barriers to Health Care

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Sovereignty
- History
- Identity
- Language
- Genocide, Federal Policy and Law

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to identify the historical and systemic factors that have contributed to healthcare barriers for Native Americans, and explain how these barriers impact health outcomes in their communities.
- Students will be able to analyze the cultural and linguistic differences that can create communication barriers between healthcare providers and Native American patients, and propose strategies for improving cross-cultural communication in healthcare settings.
- Students will be able to design culturally responsive and evidence-based solutions to address healthcare inequalities in Native American communities.

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

- Connecting to the lives of students
- Higher level thinking: analyzing
- Student talk, working together and individually

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on their participation in class and small group discussions and activities.

## Overview

In this lesson, students will explore the barriers to healthcare that Native Americans face and design potential solutions to overcome those barriers. Students will learn about the historical and systemic factors that contribute to Native Americans' limited access to healthcare, including policies such as forced relocation, forced assimilation, and underfunded healthcare facilities. Through group discussions and research, students will identify specific challenges faced by Native Americans in accessing healthcare. They will then work in groups to design potential solutions to these barriers and will present their solutions to the class, explaining the rationale and potential impact of their proposals.

## MATERIALS

- [Indian Health Services Handout](#)
- [Barriers to Health Care Articles \(3\)](#)

## LOGISTICS

- Where does this activity take place?  
**Classroom**
- How are the students organized?

**Whole Class    Teams: 3-5**

Pairs                      Individually

## TIME REQUIRED

**45-60 minutes**

## STANDARDS

### Oregon Health Education Standards & Performance Indicators

**HE.1.12.3** Explain how environment (both physical and social) and personal health are interrelated.

**HE.1.12.6** Explain how genetics and family history can impact personal health

**HE.1.12.7** Identify and analyze barriers that prevent people from practicing a variety of healthy behaviors.

**HE.1.12.8** Explain disparities that exist between access to health care and health status.

**HE.2.12.1** Analyze how culture influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

**HE.2.12.6** Analyze how race and ethnicity influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

**HE.2.12.9** Analyze how the family influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

**HE.2.12.13** Analyze how public health policies and government regulations can influence health promotion and disease prevention.

**HE.2.12.14** Analyze the relationship between health risk factors and the likelihood of engaging in unhealthy behaviors.

**HE.3.12.1** Use a variety of valid and reliable resources to research health information.

**HE.4.12.2** Demonstrate and/or explain how to ask for and offer assistance to enhance the health of self and others in a culturally relevant manner.

**HE.5.12.4** Generate a variety of options to solve health related issues or problems and predict potential short term and long term impacts of each option on self and others.

**HE.8.12.1** Utilize data to formulate a health-enhancing message.

**HE.8.12.4** Work cooperatively as an advocate for improving personal, family, and community health.

## Background for Teachers

In this high school health lesson, it is crucial for teachers to provide a brief background on the history of healthcare access among Native Americans. Students need to understand that Native Americans have experienced significant health disparities due to a combination of factors, including poverty, limited access to healthcare, historical trauma, and marginalization. Additionally, students should be aware that despite the growth of modern medicine and an increase in the number of practitioners, Native Americans continue to face disparities in healthcare, including limited access to care, higher rates of chronic diseases, and disproportionate rates of mortality. By providing context on the issues that Native Americans consistently face in healthcare, teachers can help students design potential solutions that take into account the unique cultural, societal, and economic factors that have contributed to these disparities.

As students read through the Barriers to Healthcare articles, they may need help and/or time defining terms within the articles to achieve comprehension. Teachers should review the articles ahead of time to be prepared for potential questions.

## VOCABULARY

- **Health equity:** the concept that every individual has the opportunity to achieve optimal health regardless of their social, economic, or environmental circumstances.
- **Systemic racism:** the ongoing, persistent patterns of discrimination, bias, and power imbalances that occur throughout social and economic systems and create unequal access to resources and opportunities.
- **Health disparities:** the unequal distribution of healthcare access and outcomes among different population groups.
- **Spiritual healthcare:** healthcare that addresses the spiritual and cultural needs of patients while acknowledging the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- **Social determinants of health:** the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health outcomes, including social support networks, education, housing, and access to healthy food and safe environments.

## Opening

Start the lesson by asking students if they have ever experienced any barriers to healthcare. Examples may include:

- *Lack of Access:* Limited access to healthcare services due to geographic, economic, or social reasons can be a significant barrier to healthcare for high school students.
- *Financial Constraints:* Students who come from low-income families often face financial constraints when seeking healthcare services, which makes it challenging for them to receive proper care.
- *Stigma and Discrimination:* Some students may avoid seeking healthcare services due to societal stigmas and discrimination related to health issues such as mental health, reproductive health, and sexually transmitted diseases.
- *Language and Cultural Barriers:* For students who speak languages other than English or belong to minority communities, understanding healthcare concepts, treatment procedures, and cultural differences may serve as a barrier to receiving quality healthcare.
- *Lack of Information and Support:* Students may not be well-informed about healthcare services available to them, and they may require guidance and support to navigate the healthcare system effectively.

Encourage them to share their experiences, if any. Then, introduce the topic of today's lesson - barriers to healthcare in Indian Country.

## Activity

### 1. Healthcare in Indian Country (10 minutes)

Introduce healthcare in Indian Country. Using the Indian Health Services Handout, discuss the Indian Health Service (IHS) and its role in providing healthcare services to Native American communities. Explain the unique challenges that IHS faces such as limited funding, inadequate staffing, and geographical barriers.

### 2. Barriers to Healthcare in Indian Country (25 minutes)

Discuss the common barriers to healthcare in Indian Country such as lack of transportation, language barriers, cultural differences, and mistrust of western medicine. Divide students into small groups and distribute a "Barriers to Healthcare" article to each group. Have students read through their article and identify common barriers and any initiatives that have been taken to help overcome them. Have groups share their findings aloud with the class. Consider making a cumulative chart/list in front of the class.

## Closure

### Activity - Group Discussion (15 minutes)

In their small groups, assign each group a barrier to healthcare in Indian Country. Have each group discuss the barrier and come up with potential solutions. After 10 minutes, reconvene as a class and have each group share their findings. Facilitate a class discussion on the effectiveness of these solutions in addressing the identified barriers.

## Differentiation

- Students can work independently to review the articles and design their potential solutions.
- Teachers can utilize articles and videos to demonstrate the barriers to healthcare:
  - [The health issues facing Native Americans](#)
  - [Breaking barriers: Helping Native Americans in need get the gift of life](#)
  - [How Government-Run Health Care Failed For Native Americans](#)

## Extension

- **Panel Discussion:** Invite local healthcare professionals who have experience working with Native American communities to speak to the class about the specific barriers they have encountered and brainstorm potential solutions. This could be done in a virtual or in-person panel format, with students able to ask questions and participate in the discussion.
- **Community Health Fair:** In groups, have students plan and execute a community health fair aimed specifically at addressing some of the healthcare disparities faced by Native American populations. The fair could include free health screenings, informational booths discussing common health issues faced by Native Americans, and opportunities for participants to engage with local healthcare providers and advocacy groups. Students would be responsible for coordinating with local partners, securing funding and resources, and executing various elements of the event. At the end of the project, students could reflect on the impact of their event and share their learnings with the class.

## Notes/Other

Jan Michael Looking Wolf's or Grand Ronde Canoe Family audio tracks can be played as background music while students are working. These audio tracks can be found on Spotify or Apple Music.

Jan Michael Looking Wolf: [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#)

Grand Ronde Canoe Family: [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#)

## Appendix

- Indian Health Services Handout:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lH0sWJB6EQt615YKFJYT-4XC19pWx0d/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lH0sWJB6EQt615YKFJYT-4XC19pWx0d/view?usp=drive_link)
- Barriers to Health Care Articles (3):  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/13YgTEWDdfqOiVPaQpYOR1aGFzJqoySux/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13YgTEWDdfqOiVPaQpYOR1aGFzJqoySux/view?usp=drive_link)