

TRIBAL CONSULTATION ANNUAL REPORT
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

Agency Overview

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) is the single state administered child welfare services agency for Arizona whose mission is to successfully engage children and families to ensure safety, strengthen families, and achieve permanency. The DCS vision is that children thrive in family environments free from abuse and neglect.

Tribal Consultation Activities

Consultation and communication between DCS and Tribes are essential, and are especially important in the areas of contracts management, policies and procedures, Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGA), and Indian Child Welfare Act case-related issues. The Tribal consultation activities and performance measures for SFY 2020 for DCS are listed in the following table.

Goal 1: Increase the knowledge and understanding that American Indian Tribes have of the Department's programs and policies	
Objective 1.1	Activity & Performance Measure
Build meaningful relationships with American Indian Tribes by engaging in open, continuous and relevant collaboration	In SFY2020, DCS engaged in a number and a variety of collaborative activities with Arizona's 21 Tribes. Given the unprecedented circumstances that our country has faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, DCS continued to provide essential services supporting child safety and tribal relations. Activities and services have including visiting tribal communities (pre-COVID-19) and virtually thereafter; conducting case reviews with Tribes at their request to ensure that the integrity of ICWA is maintained and information is shared; and the continuation of a Tribal/Urban Advisory Team that will provide input into the development of policies and procedures for DCS.
	The Office of the DCS Tribal Liaison maintains an "open door" policy with all tribal communities. Tribes continuously consult with the DCS Tribal Liaison on a variety of issues.
	A sustained effort continues to be made to develop and maintain relationships with the Urban Indian Community in Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff. In SFY20, a majority of ICWA cases continue to originate in Maricopa and Pima county.
Objective 1.2	Activity & Performance Measure
Dialogue with American Indian Tribes to discuss potential changes to policy, rule, legislation, or provision of services that may have a significant impact on American Indian Tribes in Arizona particularly regarding any critical events that have occurred or may occur.	Continue to work with established tribal workgroups to obtain input on DCS Policy in the areas of foster care recruitment, training, as well as input into the creation of Guardian.
	Continue to encourage tribal input regarding the development of the new Guardian system. Input sought includes considerations for the new AFCAR Rules as well as additional data collection that may be useful to the Tribes.
Objective 1.3	Activity & Performance Measure
Coordinate a quarterly communication and consultation meeting to which the American Indian Tribes in Arizona are invited regarding the development of new	Conduct quarterly meetings, in collaboration with ITCA, with Tribal Social Services Directors and Tribal ICWA contacts. These meeting occurred on: Sept. 19th, Dec. 12th, March 19th and June 18th.

policy, rules, regulation or services with substantial tribal implications.	Per the IGA established with the Navajo Nation, DCS conducted quarterly meetings with the Tribe in September and December 2019 and virtual meetings in March and July of 2020.
Goal 2: Consultation with American Indian Tribes shall occur (but is not limited to) when any legislative proposal, new rule adoption, policy change or change in the provision of services occurs that the Department or an American Indian Tribe determines may significantly affect Tribes in Arizona.	
Objective 2.1:	Activity & Performance Measure
The DCS Tribal Liaison will strive to meet annually and individually with each of the 21 American Indian Tribes in their respective communities.	Site visits were conducted to 8 Tribes in person and 13 virtual visits between July 2019 and June 2020 in their respective tribal communities and on line.
Goal 3: The Department shall participate when appropriate in any Joint Tribal/State/Federal Workgroups.	
Objective 3.1	Activity & Performance Measure
The Department may establish or participate in workgroups, task forces, other groups or committees with American Indian Tribes and others to address issues affecting American Indian Tribes in Arizona.	The Department continues to be a participant in the DCS led Native American Foster Home Recruitment Project. In June 2020, DCS reorganized the group to focus more on training foster care licensees. The Office of Tribal Relations continues to support outreach efforts of foster care recruitment made by DCS.
	The Department continues to participate in the Arizona Supreme Court ICWA Committee that strives to ensure Tribes, the Courts and DCS stay up to date on the most current ICWA information. The committee meets every quarter and hosts an annual conference.
	The Department collaborates with the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, ASU, and the Arizona Attorney General's Office to provide updated information and changes to ICWA through an ITCA sponsored ICWA academy that is held twice a year.

Other issues of interest:

1. In FY 2020 The Department, along with all other state agencies, faced many challenges in providing services and resources to the families we work with throughout Arizona. In working with Tribal and Urban Indian communities, the challenges were intensified due to the severity of the COVID-19 in many tribal communities, particularly the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Tribe and Tohono O'Odham, among others. Despite these challenges, the Department was able to provide quality consultation, communication and collaboration with Arizona's tribal community. The investigation of reports involving Indian families were completed and creative approaches, such as virtual visits for parent-child visitation and court appearances were implemented.
2. While FY 2020 will be memorable for numerous reasons, the Department has continued to provide ongoing efforts to ensure child safety despite these challenges. Overall, the Department has remained flexible, and has adapted to the daily challenges we have faced during the COVID19 pandemic. If the Department could share with other agencies our experience, particularly in working with Tribes and the urban Indian community, it would be to remain flexible and empower staff to think creatively when solving problems. Overall, the Tribes have greatly appreciated the efforts made by DCS to travel or meet virtually with tribal staff in their communities.
3. The Department provided staff, caregivers, and providers a steady stream of updated communications reflecting the latest efforts by the Department to continue its mission while adapting to the latest recommendations made by health officials. These communications were provided by email and posted to the DCS website. These communications provided specific direction to adapt standard work to align with health officials' recommendations to ensure the safety of staff, children and families, while staying true to the Department's mission. This included making virtual visits between and among parents, children, DCS staff and providers possible with the use of videoconferencing.

4. The Department recognized in the initial stages of the pandemic that caregivers were in need and contacted them directly, inquiring of their need for basic supplies such as toiletries, food boxes, bedding and other essential items. The Department partnered with community advocacy and charitable organizations to achieve this effort.
5. The Department recognized the impact COVID-19 was having on the Navajo Nation and provided communications and an administrative directive specific for the Navajo Nation for contact with parents and children using videoconferencing. This was then expanded to parents and children on all Tribal Lands.
6. During the 2020 Legislative session there were bills that affected the Department however, none that are specific to Tribes/and or the American Indian population.

For questions or more information, please contact:

Kenneth G. Poocha
Office of Tribal Relations
Intergovernmental Tribal Liaison
Phone: 928-759-1916
Fax: 928-774-4472
Kenneth.Poocha@azdcs.gov