

**TRIBAL CONSULTATION ANNUAL REPORT**  
**July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022**

**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**

| <b>Goal</b>   | <b>Objective</b>   | <b>Activity and Performance Measure</b>  |
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| Increase the knowledge and understanding that American Indian Tribes have of the Department's programs and policies |  | In SFY2022, DCS engaged in a number and a variety of collaborative activities with Arizona's 21 Tribes. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ease, particularly in Tribal communities, DCS continues to provide essential services supporting child safety and Tribal relations. Activities and services have included visiting Tribal communities both in person and virtually; conducting case reviews with Tribes at their request to ensure that the integrity of ICWA is maintained and information is shared. |
|   | Build meaningful relationships with American Indian Tribes by engaging in open, continuous and relevant collaboration. |  |
|   |  | The DCS Office of Tribal Relations maintains an "open door" policy with all Tribal communities. Tribes throughout Arizona and at times from around the country consult with DCS OTR on a variety of child safety and welfare issues including shared cases.  |

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|  |  | A sustained effort continues to be made to develop and maintain relationships with the urban Indian community of Phoenix, Tucson and Flagstaff. In SFY2022 a majority of ICWA cases continue to originate in Maricopa and Pima county. The DCS OTR works closely with the three ICWA units located in Maricopa and Pima County. |
|  | 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 other areas of the child welfare system.   |
|  |  | Provide a continuous open forum for Tribal issues and concerns that Tribes may have regarding DCS and child welfare.  |
|  | Coordinate a quarterly communication and consultation meeting to which the American Indian Tribes in Arizona are invited regarding the development of new policy, rules, regulation or services with substantial tribal implications.  |   |

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|   |  | Conduct quarterly meetings, in collaboration with ITCA, with Tribal Social Services Directors and community partners to share information, provide updates and provide networking opportunities.   |
|   |  | Per the MOA established with the Navajo Nation, DCS conducted quarterly meetings with the Nation virtually in SFY2022.   |
| Consultation with American Indian Tribes shall occur, but is not limited to, when any legislative proposal, adoption of new rules, 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. |  |  |
|   | 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 with all 21 Tribes both virtually and in person based on any community restrictions due to COVID-19 between July 2021 and June 2022. As restrictions in Tribal communities due to COVID-19 begin to ease the DCS OTR will move towards meeting with Tribal communities in person. |
| The Department shall participate when appropriate in any Joint Tribal, State, and/or Federal workgroups.  |  |  |

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|  | <p>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.</p> |   |
|  |   | <p>The Department continues to participate in the Arizona Supreme Court ICWA Committee that strives to ensure Tribes, the Courts and DCS remain up to date on the most current ICWA information. The committee meets quarterly and hosts an annual conference.</p>  |
|  |   | <p>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. In SFY2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions with ITCA only one academy was held virtually.</p> |
|  |   | <p>The DCS Office of Tribal Relations meets monthly with the Arizona Urban Indian Coalition to provide updates and share information.</p>   |

**Highlights**

- Met in person and/or virtually with all 21 of Arizona’s Tribes.
- Continued to meet with and enhance relationships with the urban programs in Flagstaff, Phoenix and Tucson to develop better access to resources, particularly in the areas of behavioral health and substance abuse treatment, for families with open DCS cases.
- Continued an ongoing policy to consult with the AAG on all ICWA cases when a change in permanency plan was requested thus reducing potential issues in court, ensuring continued compliance with ICWA and supporting Tribal positions.
- Continued to work with Tribal communities to help establish a Tribal/DCS MOU to strengthen the relationship between Tribes and DCS.

### **Recommendations from Tribal Representatives**

General recommendations include:

- Opportunities for continued training in areas of child welfare and safety and ICWA for both DCS field staff and Tribal child welfare departments.
- Continued improvement of communication between DCS and Tribal child welfare departments

### **Revisions to Tribal Consultation Policy**

- No revisions to the DCS Tribal Consultation Policy have occurred in SFY 22

### **Challenges**

- The challenges we faced during pandemic the past two years were substantial especially in working with and in Tribal communities however we were able to successfully overcome many of these barriers to ensure child safety. As we begin to move out of the pandemic there are no significant challenges that are foreseen. DCS remains committed to working with Tribal and urban Indian communities statewide to ensure child safety and the wellbeing of children and their families.

**For questions or more information, please contact:**

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