



State Court Improvement Program Tribal Work

The State Court Improvement Program (SCIP) was authorized by Congress in 1993 to help state courts assess and improve the handling of child welfare cases (abuse, neglect, guardianship and adoption). The SCIP was expanded in 2006 to promote data collection and analysis and training for court personnel. The program requires state courts to participate in “meaningful and ongoing collaboration” with state child welfare agencies, and, where applicable, tribes. The requirement for ongoing collaboration with tribes remains intact even with the creation of the new Tribal Court Improvement Program.

While some State CIPs have worked effectively with tribes for some time, efforts have increased markedly in recent years. State CIP strategic plans submitted for federal fiscal year 2013 included an unprecedented number of ICWA and tribal collaboration related projects and activities, nearly all of which were multidisciplinary in nature. At present, twenty- two states are conducting ICWA and or tribal collaboration related projects and activities. The nature of these efforts ranges widely and includes, but is not limited to:

- inviting tribal leaders and judges to participate on SCIP multi-disciplinary task forces and steering committees;
- making site visits to meet with tribal leaders, learn about tribal customs and practices, better understand tribal priorities, and discuss areas for collaboration;
- establishing state and tribal judicial workgroups and committees;
- inviting tribal representatives to attend and participate in SCIP training events and activities;
- forming statewide work groups, task forces and committees specifically focused on ICWA compliance;
- creating of ICWA checklists for judges and attorneys;
- creating ICWA training curriculum;
- revising and amending judicial bench books to include ICWA material;
- creating and holding multidisciplinary ICWA training efforts;
- organizing statewide and regional ICWA summits;
- drafting and implementing data sharing agreements between tribal and state court systems; and
- conducting ICWA compliance assessments and audit projects.

To learn more about SCIP projects and activities with tribes, please contact:

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