



Tribal Court Improvement Program

The Tribal Court Improvement Program (TCIP) was authorized by Congress in 2011 to help tribal courts assess and improve the handling of child welfare cases (abuse, neglect, guardianship and adoption). Congress appropriated one million dollars annually through 2016 to fund the TCIP through a competitive grant process. Seven tribes were awarded grants in the first round of funding: Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Navajo Nation Judicial Branch; White Earth Band of Chippewa; The Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California; Pascua Yaqui Tribe; and Nooksack Indian Tribe.

Tribal grantees proposed a range of projects and activities to assess current practice, evaluate needs and better train judges, attorneys, court personnel, and other key stakeholders. Those activities include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting a feasibility study for the establishment of a dedicated dependency court to hear child abuse and neglect cases;
- Assessing court handling of child welfare cases;
- Assessing legal representation for children and parents;
- Creating training curriculums and resources for judges and attorneys;
- Cross training court personnel and tribal social services on child welfare law and best practices;
- Reviewing, revising and updating tribal children's code and policy;
- Enhancing, improving and expanding court data collection and analysis;
- Crafting data sharing agreements between tribal courts and tribal social service agencies;
- Adapting Family Group Decision Making and integrating the practice into tribal court child welfare proceedings;
- Expanding the use of traditional peacemaking processes into child welfare proceedings;
- Developing and measuring the outcomes/impact of a parent advocacy/representation project; and
- Developing and measuring the outcomes/impact of a children's legal representation project.

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

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