

## Introduction – A message from the DCS Tribal Relations Team

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The Washington State Division of Child Support (DCS) Tribal Relations Team (TRT) is a team with an impressive history and even greater potential. Over 20 years ago, the Division of Child Support recognized and valued the importance of partnerships with Indian Tribes. Since then, numerous cooperative agreements have been negotiated, many Tribes are operating child support and/or TANF programs, and children and families in Indian Country are being better served.

Building on initial recommendations from two tribal focus group meetings and feedback received from other forums and communications, the Tribal Relations Team has developed this Strategic Plan. We involved Tribes, DCS leadership and staff, and many other stakeholders to develop an overarching plan for our team and goals to support our mission.

The Tribal Relations Team Strategic Plan is oriented toward achieving our vision of *DCS and Tribes - Bridging cultures to provide exceptional child support services*. It focuses on five key goals and several exciting project initiatives. Our plan details where we want to focus our efforts, and the progress we expect to achieve.

Thank you.

*The Tribal Relations Team*

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Washington State Division of Child Support (DCS)

**Tribal Relations Team**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-2013**

**Our Vision:**

DCS and Tribes - Bridging cultures to provide exceptional child support services.

**Our Mission:**

We lead DCS's tribal relations efforts in partnership with DCS leaders, staff, and Tribes to improve the lives of children and families.

**Our Goals:**

- Advocate for policies, procedures, and laws that respect tribal sovereignty.
- Strengthen relationships, trust, and mutual respect with all Tribes and stakeholders.
- Advance intergovernmental agreements, contracts, and processes.
- Provide valuable and timely education, training, and resources to DCS staff, Tribes, and partners.
- Create innovative approaches to provide accessible and culturally relevant services.

**Our Values:**

Core Values	Explanation	Supporting Value Words
Respect Sovereignty	We recognize and value the sovereign status of Tribes and strive to work on a government to government level.	Tribal sovereignty Government to government Culturally appropriate services Diversity Consultation
Relationships	We demonstrate the highest level of respect when working with Tribes, stakeholders, and partners. We seek direct, open communication that strengthens trust and confidence. We value community outreach.	Collaboration Mutual respect Open communication Input
Integrity	We strive to earn the trust and confidence of people through open, honest, and ethical interaction.	Openness Trust Honesty Reliable Ethical Transparency
Growth and Development	We commit ourselves to the professional growth and development of those in our team and others.	Continuous learning Training Mentoring Education
Excellence	We commit to hold ourselves to the highest ethical and professional standards.	Professionalism High Performance Innovation Proactive Front running Pride in work

## **Our Strategies and Initiatives:**

- Goal 1: Advocate for policies, procedures, and laws that respect tribal sovereignty.

Strategy – Review draft policies, procedures, and laws for tribal impact, and draft new tribal policies as needed.

Initiative 1-A – Advocate for improved tribal affiliation coding on referrals and information that DCS receives from other agencies and programs.

- Goal 2: Strengthen relationships, trust, and mutual respect with all Tribes and stakeholders.

Strategy – Increase in-person and telephone communications, conversations, and relationship-building opportunities with Tribes and stakeholders.

Initiative 2-A – Develop a process to ensure regular contact with Tribes and stakeholders.

- Goal 3: Advance intergovernmental agreements, contracts, and processes.

Strategy – Proactively engage partners and stakeholders to broaden awareness and enhance results.

Initiative 3-A – Initiate formal tribal outreach efforts with Tribes who do not have IV-D programs.

- Goal 4: Provide valuable and timely education, training, and resources to DCS staff, Tribes, and partners.

Strategy – Continue to develop training materials and on-line resources, and initiate opportunities to provide education and cross-training.

Initiative 4-A – Redesign the DCS Tribal Relations website.

Initiative 4-B – Develop and distribute a Tribal Relations brochure.

- Goal 5: Create innovative approaches to provide accessible and culturally relevant services.

Strategy – Use technology and innovation to support and improve services to Tribes.

Initiative 5-A – Build a tribal focused CSIPS (Child Support Internet Payment Service) site for electronic payments.

## **Initiative 1-A: Advocate for improved tribal affiliation coding on referrals and information that DCS receives from other agencies and programs.**

### Strategy:

Review draft policies, procedures, and laws for tribal impact, and draft new tribal policies as needed.

### Background:

Tribal affiliation coding for children and custodial or noncustodial parents is often omitted in referrals (i.e. Foster Care, Medicaid, etc.) to DCS. Sometimes specific tribal affiliation is not known, but other times the information is captured in other databases, but excluded in the referral to DCS. As a result:

- The case is assigned and worked by the RSEO instead of the Tribal Liaison in no affiliation instances.
- The RSEO may take an action that is contrary to an Intergovernmental Agreement or DCS Policy.
- The case could be mistakenly routed to the Tribal Liaison if vague “tribal issues” are noted, instead of specific tribal affiliation information. For example, if the NCP is affiliated with a non-WA Tribe and does not live or work on a reservation, then the case should have been assigned to a regular RSEO.
- DCS may mistakenly work the case instead of referring it to a Tribal IVD program.
- If paternity is at issue, DCS may mistakenly refer the case to the County Prosecutor instead of to the Tribe (if the Tribe has a IVD program or an Intergovernmental Agreement with DCS).
- Major jurisdictional conflicts arise if BOTH the state and the Tribe establish paternity for the same child.
- Tribes have expressed frustration with inaccurate tribal coding that causes a negative impact on government-to-government relations and our commitments and obligations under the Centennial Accord and DSHS Administrative Policy 7.01.

### Solution:

- Work with Medicaid, Foster Care, and TANF staff to improve tribal affiliation coding on electronic referrals
  - Advise them of the problem, research what tribal information they collect, and identify possible solutions
  - Solicit tribal input and feedback in developing possible solutions
  - Work with IT staff from DCS SEMS, ACES, IVE, and Medicaid to expand critical electronic information DCS needs to identify tribal cases
- Work with the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (WAPA) Best Practices Workgroup to improve methods to capture tribal affiliation information on tribal paternity cases sent to them in error
  - Share the issue, research what tribal information they collect, and identify possible solutions
  - Recommend a Best Practice to ask Tribal Affiliation information on initial forms and during the initial CP interview and screening
  - Encourage County Prosecutor communication with local DCS Tribal Liaisons if Tribal issues arise

### Anticipated results:

- Tribal Cases will be assigned to DCS Tribal Liaisons instead of the RSEO
- DCS will refer appropriate cases to Tribes
- DCS will honor existing Policy, Cooperative Agreements, and Centennial Accord obligations
- County Prosecuting Attorney’s will not mistakenly work cases that should be referred to a Tribal Court or Tribal IVD program
- Improved data integrity

Lead: Tribal Relations Team

(Revised 3-3-09)

## **Initiative 2-A: Develop a process to ensure regular contact with Tribes and stakeholders.**

### Strategy:

Increase in-person and telephone communications, conversations, and relationship-building opportunities with Tribes and stakeholders.

### Background:

The DCS Tribal Relations Team (TRT) intends to maintain/strengthen contacts with each Tribe and stakeholder (prosecutors, OCSE, field staff, other DSHS staff) with whom they work. Contracts, data sharing agreements, legal/policy issues, Tribal TANF Programs and Tribal Child Support Programs make up a majority of the contacts with TRT. These contacts only occur with a handful of Tribes that have programs affected or involved.

TRT is comprised of three staff, each with multiple duties and heavy workloads. Tracking and recording contacts with staff or members of Tribes and stakeholder is cumbersome. Currently, team members report out their contacts during weekly team meetings. This format of reporting is neither effective, nor efficient. There is no way to track the TRT contacts over longer periods of time. TRT values each Tribe and stakeholder they work with and intends to ensure contact a minimum of twice a year. TRT identified a need for an automated system to document our contacts and ensure our efforts are consistent and balanced.

### Solution:

Develop a computer based system to track and ensure regular TRT contact with all Tribes in Washington and all other stakeholders. To achieve success, the tracking system will incorporate the following:

- Allow each team member to update their contact details
- Reminder system to flag deadlines, or lack of contact with a specific Tribe
- Allow the data to display in real-time
- Ease for a reader to quickly scan or search the information

### Anticipated results:

- Strengthened relationships
- Assurance that no Tribe is overlooked
- Consistent contact by TRT with *all* Washington Tribes and stakeholders
- Removal/reduction of duplicate efforts by team members

### Lead:

Tribal Relations Team

### **Initiative 3-A: Initiate formal tribal outreach efforts with Tribes who do not have IV-D programs.**

#### Strategy:

Proactively engage partners and stakeholders to broaden awareness and enhance results.

#### Background:

In the early 1990's, DCS staff met with Tribal Councils and Tribal Social Service employees across the State. DCS Staff shared child support issues with them, sought their input and concerns, and shared various options in addressing child support. The intent was to improve child support services in Indian Country by building and strengthening relationships, better understanding of tribal concerns, developing culturally appropriate child support services, sharing various options to address child support, and providing education and training opportunities for Tribes and DCS. As a result of these presentations, Tribes requested more training on child support. DCS developed a curriculum for a one-day Child Support 101 Training and subsequently provided training at many Tribal locations.

DCS held focus group meetings with Tribes in April 2007 and June 2007 to discuss the ESA reorganization of tribal child support. During these meetings Tribes identified the need for another round of child support presentations and meetings with Tribes throughout the state. Today, there are more child support options and opportunities available to Tribes, so the timing is right to again offer tribal outreach presentations.

#### Solution:

- Coordinate with local field office Tribal Liaisons to identify Tribes who are less connected with our program, and Tribes with which DCS only provides very limited child support services
- Meet with interested Tribes to learn about their concerns regarding child support and share information and resources regarding child support
- Offer to provide Child Support 101 Workshops with interested Tribes

#### Anticipated Results:

- Build stronger relationships, partnerships, and connections with Tribes
- Gain a better understanding of tribal concerns regarding child support, and address those concerns
- Ensure Tribes are aware of all of the various options that are now available for Tribes to address child support
- Improve and expand child support services in Indian Country

#### Lead:

Tribal Relations Team

## Initiative 4-A: Redesign the DCS Tribal Relations Website.

### Strategy:

Continue to develop training materials and on-line resources, and initiate opportunities to provide education and cross-training.

### Background:

In 1999, DCS developed the Tribal Relations Website ([www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/tribal](http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/tribal)). The site provides a wealth of information such as treaties; federal, state and tribal law and policies; child support agreements; tribal support codes, etc. TRT maintains and updates the site. As technologies advanced in the past ten years, the site has not been modified to take advantage of new technology options. The main DCS website recently experienced a complete overhaul and conversion to SharePoint. TRT intends to overhaul their Tribal Relations Website to align with the Division's website where possible and create a user-friendly, efficient, and fully encompassing website for use by the public, and tribal, federal, and state staff.

### Solution:

- Create a professional and accessible interactive new website for DCS Tribal Relations
- Align the site with DCS' main website where possible
- Incorporate current technology specifications, guidelines, software, and tools
- Ensure site complies with internet website standards related to development, usage, navigation, and flow
- Ensure site is organized, *clean, CSS-based (Cascading Style Sheets), accessible, usable, and search engine friendly*

### Anticipated results:

- Improved navigation and ease of reading encouraging higher, more efficient usage
- Easier access & usability for staff, Tribes, and the public will reduce questions
- End user receives a pleasurable experience while surfing site
- Alignment with DCS Website
- Increased traffic (website hits)

### Lead:

Tribal Relations Team

## **Initiative 4-B: Develop and distribute a Tribal Relations brochure.**

### Strategy:

Continue to develop training materials and on-line resources, and initiate opportunities to provide education and cross-training.

### Background:

DCS needs a tribal brochure that is consistent with other DCS Brochures and includes information from the TRT Strategic Plan.

The existing tribal brochure was drafted in 2005 and is now outdated. In 2007, with input from statewide tribal focus groups, ESA reorganized. ESA moved 1.5 Tribal child support positions from the State Tribal Relations Unit (STRU) to DCS HQ, and added 1.5 additional positions to create a new Tribal Relations Team (TRT). The TRT coordinated with DCS managers, local tribal liaisons, and tribal partners to develop a Strategic Plan that supports the needs identified in the 2007 focus groups.

### Solution:

- Closely coordinate with Tribes, DCS Tribal Liaisons, DCS Leadership Team, DCS Community Relations Unit (CRU), DSHS Publications, and Department of Printing to publish a TRT brochure
- Ensure the brochure includes TRT's Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, Services, Website, and Contact information

### Anticipated results:

- Educate customers, partners, and stakeholders on the services we provide
- Provide contact information to the public
- Use the brochure as a resource for outreach events
- Expand opportunities to connect with Tribes

### Lead:

Tribal Relations Team

## **Initiative 5-A: Build a tribal focused CSIPS (Child Support Internet Payment Service) site for electronic payments.**

### Strategy:

Use technology and innovation to support and improve services to Tribes.

### Background:

A majority of tribal employers and tribal child support programs send child support payments to DCS through physical check/money orders. It is the intent of the project to design an enhanced user friendly, culturally relevant, tribal portal to the existing CSIPS website.

### Solution:

- Create a website with a culturally relevant look and feel that would attract more tribal employers and tribal IV-D programs to make payments
- Incorporate and allow personalized esthetic changes, with the intent of creating a CSIPS website with a tribal feel to it (potentially modifiable by each Tribe, allowing them their own personalized views/images)
- Expand the CSIPS site to allow external users to pull down reports
- Add an option for 'interstate payment' codes for tribal IV-D programs to make payments, this would allow for potential reporting of IV-D payment records
- Outreach efforts to Tribes at the initial stages of development will be crucial in assuring that our product is something culturally relevant and valued by Tribes
- Outreach efforts upon completion of the project, to educate, share, and promote the use of the 'Tribal CSIPS' portal

### Anticipated results:

- Time and cost saved by tribal and state employees when processing payments
- Tribes able to pull reports
- Increased payment volume from tribal child support programs and tribal employers
- Increased accuracy, speed, and security in payment application
- Expanded opportunities to connect with Tribes as a result of our efforts to assist them in making the process easier and useful

### Lead:

Tribal Relations Team