

RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING RESOURCE FAMILIES IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES



All children deserve a strong, protective circle of caring adults to make sure they are loved, safe, and connected to their community, tribe, and culture. Providing care to children who are not with their own families is one of the most important ways to become part of their protective circle.

Resource families provide love, care, and a sense of belonging to children who have experienced trauma, grief, separation, and loss. Resource families play an important role in supporting reunification and in ensuring the child's connection to their extended family and tribal community.

Recruiting, retaining, and supporting resource families is important work for tribal child welfare professionals that can help Native children and families achieve the best possible outcomes.

Embedding Support in All You Do: Five Ways Tribes Can Support Resource Families from First Engagement – Kendra Lowden, AdoptUSKids, 2023

This article, authored by Kendra Lowden, an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and a descendant of the Osage Nation, emphasizes the importance of supporting tribal resource families throughout the entire process, from their initial inquiry to becoming approved foster, adoptive, or kinship caregivers. It highlights the significance of timely and engaging communication during the initial inquiry phase, stressing the need for good customer service as a form of family support. The article also suggests streamlining the application process, addressing barriers to participation, and connecting with families during pre-service training to provide cultural information and support.

Going to the Extreme to Find Children's Families – AdoptUSKids, 2021

FosterAdopt Connect, an agency that provides post-adoption support to families in Missouri and eastern Kansas, has been locating birth families using an "Extreme Family Finding" model since 2019, in which a social worker is paired with a private investigator and together they search for birth family members for a child whose permanency plan is adoption. In 2020, they received a one-year grant from the Children's Bureau to replicate the model at sites in Rhode Island, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Kansas.

Preserving Culture: Helping Children – booklet from First Nations Fostering, Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families, 2021

This booklet includes frequently asked questions about foster care, available supports, and additional resources.



Stronger Families Together, South Dakota Department of Social Services

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is a federal law that establishes foster care placement preference for Native American children. The law designates preference to 1) family members 2) tribal members, and 3) other Native American resource families; tribes may establish a different order of preference by resolution (25 U.S.C. § 1915 (c)). Families who can maintain cultural connections for tribal children in out-of-home placements are in great need.

Downloadable publications include a [myths and facts flyer](#), [realities flyer](#), and a 66-page [handbook](#).

Preserving Connections: Best Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Tribal Foster Families for American Indian and Alaska Native children – Casey Family Programs, 2018 Interactive Infographic and downloadable [poster](#).

American Indian and Alaska Native children thrive with families that reflect their culture, especially if they need to be placed in out-of-home care. In order to maintain these connections, when a child is found to be in imminent danger, ICWA requires that the child be placed in a home that falls under those placement preferences until the child can be reunified.

Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan 2023 – South Dakota Department of Social Services Division of Child Protection Services

This plan includes data, recruitment and retention strategies, an Adoption Call to Action, and information about the Stronger Families Together initiative.

Tribal Support Services Assessment Tool – AdoptUSKids, 2022

The [Tribal Support Services Assessment Tool](#) and [Companion Guide](#) are designed to help tribes assess and improve services offered to foster, kinship, adoptive, and customary adoptive families. Utilize this tool to assess support services for quality, accessibility, and cultural competence, pinpoint service gaps and areas for improvement, and formulate an action plan informed by assessment findings to promote system improvement.

Barriers to Recruiting Native American Foster Homes In Urban Areas – Shirley Mae Begay and Jennifer Lynn Wilczynski, California State University San Bernardino, 2018

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the current practice and barriers specific to recruiting Native American foster homes in urban areas. The literature review suggested that historical, cultural, and bureaucratic barriers to recruitment existed. Findings suggest that the recruitment of Native American foster families is hampered by numerous factors, including lack of financial support, bias and judgment, lack of cultural awareness, and an absence of connection to the community. The research also identified proactive efforts by individuals and agencies to specifically recruit Native American foster homes.

Santee Sioux Foster Parent Training Program

The Santee Sioux Nation of Nebraska has implemented a Native adaptation of a foster parent training program. This ten-week course for tribal members who are in the process of, or considering, becoming foster parents incorporates Native cultural elements, traditional parenting lessons, and principles of trauma-informed care.

Strategies for Successfully Recruiting and Retaining Preferred-Placement Foster Homes for American Indian Children – Casey Family Programs, 2017

This brief highlights strategies used by tribal and state teams working to increase the number of foster parents for American Indian children and efforts to expand foster placements that reflect children’s culture and that comply with ICWA support best outcomes for children. Because many child welfare jurisdictions across the United States face shortages of foster parents, strategies that increase foster care placements in family settings within children’s own communities may be of broad interest.

Foster Care Program - Webpage for Foster Care and Adoptive Parents – Native American Community Services of Erie & Niagra Counties, Inc.

NACS Foster Care Program’s primary goal is to serve every child with Native American heritage in Erie and Niagara Counties, living off-territory, in a home that can best meet the needs of Native American children and families within the requirements of ICWA. This site includes a downloadable foster parent manual and information about these topics: how to become foster parents, requirements to become foster parents, living with a child in foster care, and in-depth answers to frequently asked questions.

Understanding, Engaging, and Supporting Native American Families, webinar July 2022 – AdoptUSKids, part of the Webinars for Child Welfare series.

In this webinar, presenters Heather La Forme-Maldonado, MPA Onondaga, Beaver AdoptUSKids consultant and Kendra Lowden, MS, Potawatomi and Osage, AdoptUSKids consultant, provide an introduction to tribes, citizenship, and connection. They also suggest strategies to support and engage families.

This webinar was originally designed as part of a capacity-building effort for a specific state. The state granted AdoptUSKids permission to make this webinar publicly available.

Recruiting Families for Native American Children: Strengthening Partnerships for Success – the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids, 2015

As state (county/territory) child welfare systems serve Native American children, it is crucial to have a strong understanding of both best practices and laws that govern policies and practices for serving Native American children and coordinating with tribes. It is also valuable to recognize the essential tribal relations of Indian people and the cultural and social standards prevailing in Indian communities and families. This publication provides a brief overview of relevant laws, best practices, tips, and considerations for partnering effectively with tribes and recruiting families for Native American children in foster care.

National Training and Development Curriculum for Foster and Adoptive Parents (NTDC)

The new curriculum from the NTDC is based on research and input from experts, families who have experience with fostering or adopting children, and former foster and adoptive youth. It is a state-of-the-art classroom and online program that helps to prepare prospective foster and adoptive parents and provides access to information and resources needed to continue building skills once they have a child in their home.

Native American Training Institute (North Dakota)

Designed to address significant issues identified by Native American foster parents, this ten-part training series is a one-of-a-kind and user-friendly curriculum based on the traditions and cultures of Native American people. This training provides many helpful hints and tools foster parents can use to problem-solve in their everyday lives as caregivers to help children grow to meet their potential in mind, body, spirit, and emotions.

Additional Resources:

[Casey Family Programs – Permanency Resources](#)

[Child Welfare Information Gateway – Out-of-Home Care Resources](#)

[Fostering Families Today – Resources for Kinship Navigators](#)



The Children's Bureau within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funds the Child Welfare Capacity Building Center for Tribes. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funder.