



Division of Safety and Permanence

DSP Informational Memo Series 2025-18i

September 3rd, 2025

To: DCF/DMCPS Administrator
DCF Area Administrators
Child Placing Agency Directors
Child Welfare Agency Directors
County Departments of Community Programs Directors
County Departments of Human Services Directors
County Departments of Social Services Directors
Group Home Providers
Private Child Placing Agencies
Residential Care Center Providers
Shelter Care Providers
Tribal Chairpersons

From: John Elliott
Administrator

Re: **New Access and Initial Assessment Standards Appendix 13 on CPS Agencies' Responsibility to Engage with Tribal Nations**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to introduce a new Appendix to the [Child Protective Services \(CPS\) Access and Initial Assessment Standards](#) (referred to as "standards" throughout this memo). This appendix provides guidance on best practices for engaging with tribal nations and collaborating to fulfill statutory requirements of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA). These federal and state statutes are in place to "...protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families..." (25 U.S.C. § 1902). This appendix supports local agencies' efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family and strengthen positive outcomes for Indian children and their families through collaboration between the local CPS agency and the respective Indian child's tribe(s).

BACKGROUND

During the Initial Assessment Improvement Project, the Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) began working with a subgroup of the Intertribal Child Welfare (ICW) Committee to enhance sections of the standards related to local CPS agencies' engagement with tribal nations during the Access and Initial Assessment (IA) processes. As part of this work, a new appendix was created to emphasize the importance of this collaboration and further describe practices that attend to the statutory requirements mandated by ICWA and WICWA.



INFORMATION SUMMARY

In addition to integrating and aligning with ICWA and WICWA, the new Appendix 13 on CPS Agencies' Responsibility to Engage with Tribal Nations provides specific guidance on best practices for staff, supervisors, and local CPS agency leaders to engage tribal nations in a way that is meaningful, respectful, and meets the statutory requirements established by ICWA and WICWA to protect Indian children and preserve Indian families. The appendix includes guidance on:

- Understanding each person's role in supporting Indian children and their families.
- Practicing cultural responsibility.
- Building a strong partnership with tribal child welfare professionals and leaders.
- Implementing shared decision-making and collaboration strategies to support compliance with active efforts, placement preferences, and other ICWA and WICWA requirements.

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MEMO WEB SITE: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy>

Attachments [Child Protective Services Access and Initial Assessment Standards](#)