



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

Agency Training Efforts

The DCF Tribal Affairs team is a collaboration and partnership of the DCF Tribal Liaison, Stephanie Lozano, the DCF Division of Safety and Permanence Tribal Affairs Specialist, Tania Cornelius, and the DCF Division of Early Care and Education Policy and Program Analyst, Sherri Underwood.

This year, our Division of Early Care and Education developed a **guide to aid staff in their understanding how to engage and partner with Tribal Nations and communities**. The guide, rooted in historical context, provides staff with a collection of ideas and resources to help build capacity of our staff. This guide has received high levels of gratitude and appreciation from our staff as they continue to learn about Tribal Nations.

Over the course of the past year, our Division of Milwaukee Child Protection Services (DMCPS) has been working to **create a training** for DMCPS Initial Assessment Specialists, Supervisors, and the workers from their contracted case management agencies. While DMCPS responded to address issues that were brought to their attention from the Intertribal Child Welfare (ICW) Committee they recognized that this was not a long-term solution to support collaborative relationships. DMCPS approached the ICW Directors with the idea of developing a training with a focus on collaboration, which they supported.

The training serves as a lunch and learn refresher with history on ICWA and WICWA, the expectations of collaborating with Tribal Child Welfare Professionals, while also providing examples of what collaboration can look like. In addition, the feedback DMCPS received when presenting drafts of the training to the ICW Directors was to include reminders of Active Efforts and Placement Preferences. We used this feedback to **develop a one-pager** that DMCPS staff could carry with them and could reference easily.

The finalized one pager will be published on the DMCPS webpage and the training will begin to be offered in late Spring 2025. DMCPS will ensure that all staff complete this training. Updates on progress and implementation will continue to be provided to the ICW Directors.

With the feedback and guidance of the ICW, DCF Tribal Affairs, in partnership with the Children's Court Improvement Program, has also **updated the Qualified Expert Witness (QEW) WICWA Implementing Guidelines** that will be made available publicly once it is approved and finalized. Prior to this effort, the QEW WICWA Implementing Guidelines had not been updated since its creation in 2013.

Beginning in the third quarter of 2023, the DCF Tribal Liaison and the DSP Tribal Affairs Specialist began partnering with the Child Welfare Coordinators from the DCF Bureau of Regional Operations to offer a series of **one-day training on ICWA and WICWA**. To date, the team has held 9 training days throughout the state and has provided training to 168 county agency workers and supervisors from 25 counties (please see enclosed map for additional information). There are additional training dates planned through 2025.

Since 2014, the DCF Tribal Affairs team has assembled a library of presentations utilizing platforms and web-based apps (or applications) like Kahoot!, PowerPoint, and lecture. We remain part of the interagency team that is designing and implementing a series of computer based training for state employees to comply with Governor Evers' Executive Order 18. The DCF Tribal Affairs team continues to provide training and resources to all DCF Divisions, Bureaus, Sections, and Programs.

The DCF Tribal Liaison has developed, implemented, and continues to update a **best practice toolkit for state-tribal consultations**. The DCF Tribal Liaison regularly holds office hours for DCF teams and provides training and information to members of the DCF Leadership Team, DCF staff, and tribal liaisons from other agencies. Both the DCF Tribal Liaison and the DSP Tribal Affairs Specialist provide onboarding sessions and training to new employees, and refresher training to existing staff as needed.

Our team continues to offer **training, guidance, and resources** on broad subject matter including: federal Indian policy (past and present), ICWA and WICWA (including notice, active efforts and placement preferences), land acknowledgements, terminology, Indigenous Peoples' Day, tribal sovereignty, tribal governance structures and service delivery, partnering with tribal agencies, and collaborating to provide services to tribal children and families.

Our team is available to agency staff, state employees, tribal leaders, tribal staff, and all partners for one-on-one calls, questions, resources, and advice. We also routinely connect employees and various partners with their tribal counterparts for tribe-specific information.

DCF Tribal Affairs continues to be invited to present at: conferences; other state agencies; school of social work classes; as well as DCF partner agencies (counties, contractors, etc.). The DCF Tribal Liaison is routinely sought to provide assistance, advice, and support to federal agencies, Children and Family Services agencies located in other states, and national technical assistance providers.