

# Indian Child and Family Well-being







# The importance of ICWA

## **The Indian Child Welfare Act,**

passed in 1978 and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2023, is a comprehensive federal law designed to protect American Indian/Alaska Native children, families and tribes from unnecessary child removal and displacement, and to promote the stability and security of tribes and families.

Family separation policies have impacted Native American communities throughout much of recent history. From the 17th to the 20th centuries, many children were sent to boarding schools where they were not allowed to speak their native languages or follow their cultural practices, and they rarely saw their families. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Indian Adoption Project removed hundreds of children from their cultural communities and placed them in non-Native foster or adoptive families. This has left a lasting legacy that tribal nations are working to overcome. Tribes have a government-to-government relationship with the United States based upon treaties, and they possess tribal sovereignty based upon their inherent right to self-determination.

ICWA exemplifies the gold standard principles of child welfare practice. It requires additional responsibilities for the public child welfare system and special judicial oversight when American Indian/Alaska Native children are involved in state child welfare systems.

For example, ICWA requires active efforts to keep children with their parents. When American Indian/Alaska Native children need to be placed in out-of-home care, they must be placed with extended family or, if this is not possible, in homes that will keep them connected with their culture and community.

Casey Family Programs emphasizes ICWA compliance because we believe it advances the best interests of American Indian/Alaska Native children and families and represents best practices in the field, and because these children are still removed from their homes and placed with strangers at a disproportional rate.<sup>1</sup>

To learn more about ICWA, visit the National Indian Child Welfare Association website at [www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org).

<sup>1</sup> National Indian Child Welfare Association. Setting the record straight: The Indian Child Welfare Act fact sheet. Portland, OR: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.nicwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Setting-the-Record-Straight-2018.pdf>





# OUR WORK

How we work toward

## **INDIAN CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING**

Casey's Indian Child and Family Well-being Program partners with tribes and American Indian/Alaska Native communities to support their development of effective and culturally responsive child welfare services. Strong sovereign tribal nations keep children healthy, safe and connected with their families, relatives, tribal communities and cultures. Staff work directly with tribes, providing consultation and technical assistance on implementing child welfare programs.

Our Indian Child and Family Well-being Program team implements a variety of national strategies and projects, including those designed to:

- Demonstrate and spread effective and culturally relevant tribal child well-being practice and policy.
- Support tribes' capacity to access state and federal funding streams and build their infrastructure to provide necessary services.
- Strengthen tribal and state partnerships and support the effective implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act and its gold standard principles of child welfare practice.
- Help tribes with prevention and reunification efforts, connecting children with their families, communities and culture.
- Engage tribal leaders, families and youth as active participants in improving the well-being of families.



## Our longstanding commitment to **TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

The United States is home to more than 570 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. Each is distinct, with its own culture, traditions, language and community.

Casey Family Programs has a long history of working with tribes to improve the well-being of their children and families. Our Indian child well-being work began in the mid-1980s and grew to include teams that worked in Bismarck and Fort Berthold, North Dakota, and Martin, Pine Ridge, Rapid City and Rosebud, South Dakota. In 1999, we opened our Denver office, where our Indian Child and Family Well-being Program team is based.

Casey Family Programs partners with tribes and national partners through efforts that honor tribal sovereignty and support nation-building, help build capacity and support tribal-state efforts to effectively implement the Indian Child Welfare Act and its principles as the gold standard of child well-being practice.





# ABOUT US

## Who we are and **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care in the United States. Our mission is to provide and improve — and ultimately prevent the need for — foster care.

### **We believe:**

- Every child deserves a safe, supportive and permanent family.
- Every family will thrive with the support of a caring community.
- Every community can create hope and opportunities for its children and families.
- Every one of us has a role to play in Building Communities of Hope.



### Casey Family Programs

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families in the United States. By working together, we can create a nation where Communities of Hope provide the support and opportunities that children and families need to thrive. Founded in 1966, we work in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and with tribal nations across North America to influence long-lasting improvements to the well-being of children, families and the communities where they live.

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