



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association

NICWA 2020 Policy Priorities

Each year the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) identifies policy priorities to guide our efforts and focus our resources during the calendar year. These annual priorities are developed through input from our board, staff, and tribal constituents. They reflect our mission, ongoing commitments, and assessment of opportunities to improve services and resources for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families. NICWA's 2020 policy priorities include the following:

- 1) Expand and support the network of tribal leaders who advocate on behalf of AI/AN children and families.**
 - a) Provide tribal leadership with information on effective child welfare governance, including working in partnership with youth, to support change in tribal communities that improves the well-being of AI/AN children, youth, and families.
 - b) Expand tribal leader engagement and advocacy on NICWA priority policy issues at the federal and state level.

- 2) Defend the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and advocate for proper and consistent implementation.**
 - a) Educate federal policymakers, federal and state administrative officials, and state courts on the benefits of ICWA, its relationship to good child welfare practice, and opportunities to strengthen ICWA implementation and protect the law.
 - b) Educate core mainstream partners about the steps they can take to participate in efforts to protect ICWA and support effective implementation at the state level.
 - c) Defend the 2016 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System Final Rule that requires states to collect information on AI/AN children and families that are in state child welfare systems and subject to ICWA requirements.

- 3) Ensure federal and state child welfare policy supports culturally appropriate services for AI/AN children and families and provides tribal nations equitable access to federal resources.**
 - a) Advocate for timely distribution of COVID-19 resources for tribes and urban Indian organizations related to human services programming and establishment of legislative and administrative policy that is efficient and provides flexibility and needed services.

- b) Advocate for administrative policy that allows tribal nations and states to develop and utilize culturally based and culturally adapted prevention services for AI/AN children and families as provided for under the Family First Prevention Services Act (Division E of Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018—H.R. 1892).
 - c) Advocate for increased funding for tribal nations and a study on best child abuse prevention practices in Indian Country under the 2019 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act reauthorization.
 - d) Advocate for reauthorization of the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act that reauthorizes existing grant programs and increases authorizations to needed levels.
 - e) Advocate for parity in existing federal tax credit policy for tribal families that adopt AI/AN children through tribal courts (S. 305).
- 4) Advocate for federal funding levels that provide parity with other governments to address the needs of AI/AN children and families in child welfare and children’s mental health systems.**
- a) Educate federal policymakers and administration officials on the barriers to tribal and urban Indian program access to child welfare and children’s mental health services.
 - b) Advocate for sufficient federal funding levels so that every tribal government and urban Indian program can offer the child welfare and mental health services that are needed within their communities.
 - c) Advocate for appropriate matching funds policies that promote tribal participation in federal child and family programs and are aligned with tribal economic realities.