



2025 Policy Priorities

Each year, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) identifies policy priorities that guide our efforts and focus our resources during the calendar year. These annual priorities are developed with 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 children, families, and communities.

In 2024, NICWA and tribal partners established a generational strategic plan, referred to as ICWA 2050, to protect the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for future generations and improve tribal nation capacity in child welfare. NICWA's annual policy priorities reflect the goals and objectives of this plan. They also reflect our commitment to ensuring Native children are protected, their families are well supported, and they are connected to their tribal communities and culture. These priorities position tribal sovereignty as the centerpiece of all our policy solutions. NICWA's 2025 policy priorities are listed below with references to the ICWA 2050 goals and objectives.

Goal 1: Increase funding and support to tribal nations so that every tribe can provide the full range of child welfare services needed by their children and families (ICWA 2050).

- a. Increase federal appropriations for tribal human service programs to a level that is equitable to state funding and responsive to the needs of tribal nations. Advocate

for sufficient federal funding levels from Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Interior programs so that every tribal nation and urban Indian program can offer the child welfare and related services needed by their communities (Goal 1, Objective 1 and 7).

- b. Protect the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and advocate for the establishment of a 5% tribal set-aside to provide flexible human services funding directly to tribal nations (Goal 1, Objective 1 and Goal 3, Objective 3).
- c. Establish a 5% tribal set-aside in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program to allow more tribal nations to receive funding to support primary and secondary child abuse prevention programs (Goal 1, Objective 1 and Goal 3, Objective 3).
- d. Advocate for reauthorization of the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act (P.L. 101-630) to fully reauthorize existing child abuse prevention and victim treatment grant programs and increase authorizations to needed levels (Goal 1, Objective 1 and Goal 3, Objective 3).
- e. Provide tribal leadership with information on effective child welfare governance, including working in partnership with youth, parents, and relative caregivers, maximizing funding, and supporting change in tribal child welfare systems that improves child and family well-being (Goal 1, Objective 4).

Goal 2: Establish strong working relationships between tribal nations and states so that ICWA is rigorously implemented and all Native children and families in child welfare systems have the benefit of culturally based services and support that improve outcomes (ICWA 2050).

- a. Examine ICWA accountability systems and measures to determine the strengths and challenges of different state and federal models as well as opportunities to establish stronger, complementary state and federal accountability systems (Goal 2, Objective 3 and Goal 3, Objective 1).

- b. Participate in the Uniform Law Commission process to develop a model state ICWA law for tribal nations who are interested in establishing a state ICWA law in their state and identify support tribal nations may need to successfully lead efforts to pass a state ICWA law (Goal 2, Objective 1).

Goal 3: Establish a federal-tribal relationship that rigorously monitors and supports ICWA compliance and establishes increased child welfare capacity for every tribal nation and urban Indian organization to provide the culturally based services their communities need and assist them in helping support state ICWA implementation (ICWA 2050).

- a. Expand Tribal Self Governance, P.L 102-477 program options, and other models of tribal operation of federal programs that reduce tribal administrative burden, support tribal sovereignty, and afford tribal nations flexibility to provide effective and efficient services for their communities (Goal 3, Objective 3).
- b. Educate the new Administration on tribal nation political status, consultation, tribal program service delivery, and the role of tribal sovereignty in supporting and developing effective policy and program solutions in tribal human services (Goal 3, Objective 3).
- c. Develop written materials and provide presentations on the impact of Executive Orders issued by the new Administration on tribal human services and urban Indian organization programs (Goal 3, Objectives 3 and 5).
- d. Partner with tribal leadership and the Administration for Children and Families under the Department of Health and Human Services to establish a plan for implementation of legal requirements contained within the Supporting America's Children and Families Act (P.L. 118-258), which include ICWA data collection by states, a funding increase to tribal Title IV-B of the Social Security Act grants, streamlining administration of Title IV-B programs, and improving tribal engagement in state child welfare proceedings (Goal 3, Objectives 1 and 3).