



## GAO Review of Tribal Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Programs

### Background

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is an independent, nonpartisan agency within the legislative branch that works on behalf of the U.S. Congress. GAO is conducting a review of how the federal government supports American Indian and Alaska Native tribal services and programs to prevent child abuse and neglect. We are conducting this work at the request of Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska (Chair, Indian Affairs Committee) and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts.

### Purpose

As part of our work, GAO plans to coordinate with tribal communities to better understand their efforts to keep children from entering the child welfare system through services that prevent child abuse and neglect. Prevention services can include those aimed at preventing abuse and neglect before it happens and preventing recurrence of abuse and neglect if it has already occurred. Specifically, we are interested in learning about what federal funding streams communities are using to support these services, how services are culturally adapted, challenges in accessing federal funding opportunities, and experiences with technical assistance provided by the federal government. To that end, we are hoping to gain first-hand perspectives on these topics so we can examine whether the federal government can better support prevention services.

In addition to speaking with a variety of Tribes at the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) conference, we are hoping to meet with additional Tribes that vary based on level of federal funding received (such as under the Indian Child Welfare Act grant program and Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act) and structure of child welfare service provision (e.g. Tribes who operate their own child welfare agency versus coordinating services with the state).

GAO is not evaluating specific Tribes' or Native villages' activities, or non-tribal community or stakeholder activities. Further, GAO may report on general themes from stakeholder perspectives (e.g. "staff from two Tribal child welfare offices indicated x can be a challenge..."), but we will not attribute statements to specific people or groups.

GAO's review includes the following overall questions:

- 1) What federal funds are available to Tribes for child abuse and neglect prevention programs and what data do Tribes collect and report?
- 2) What, if any, challenges have Tribes experienced in implementing child abuse and neglect prevention programs?
- 3) What actions, if any, has the federal government taken to help Tribes address challenges in implementing child abuse and neglect prevention programs?

### Topics for Discussion:

GAO is interested in obtaining American Indian or Alaska Native officials', Tribal child welfare professionals', and citizens' perspectives on:

- Programs or services in place to help prevent child abuse and neglect (at the community level and for at-risk families)
- Use of federal funds for prevention and data collection on prevention services, child abuse and neglect prevalence, and/or other child welfare outcomes
- Challenges in implementing programs or providing services
- Coordination with the federal government on prevention

We sincerely appreciate any input that you could provide to us. If you would like to share your thoughts with us, please contact Andrea Dawson, Assistant Director (202-512-4984 or [dawsona@gao.gov](mailto:dawsona@gao.gov)) or Amrita Sen, Analyst-in-Charge (312-220-7601 or [sena@gao.gov](mailto:sena@gao.gov)). Thank you very much for your time.