

Spotlight on Collaborating with Tribes and Courts

Cross-system collaboration between child welfare agencies, [tribes](#), and [courts](#) is critical to improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. Effective collaboration requires building productive working relationships and thoughtfully integrating processes and service delivery across systems.

Strong partnerships at both the system and practice level can facilitate clear communication, enhance cultural awareness, improve access across systems, strengthen initiatives that incorporate key perspectives and sources of support, and promote a responsive and effective service array.

Facts

Although agencies, tribes, and courts share responsibility for improving the lives of children and families, they have often failed to effectively collaborate and face challenges to collaboration, including:

- ▶ Lack of understanding of each partner’s culture, roles, and limitations[\[1\]](#)
- ▶ Historical trauma that has resulted in adversarial relations between states and tribes[\[2\]](#)
- ▶ Limited data capacity to monitor and measure performance, continuously improve outcomes, and support cross-system collaboration[\[3\]](#)

Resources

Effective collaboration among agencies, courts, and tribes can help achieve compliance with federal laws, including the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113–183), and can enhance outcomes for children, youth, and families.

To collaborate successfully, agencies can work with tribes and courts to develop and use culturally responsive partnership protocols and engagement and service strategies. Partners can also work together to create continuous quality improvement (CQI) systems designed to promote improvements in Child and Family Services Review results and child welfare outcomes.

The Capacity Building Center for States has [several resources](#) to help agencies build capacity for collaborating with [tribes](#) and [courts](#):

Publications

- ▶ [“Pathways to Permanency: Collaborating on the APPLA Provisions of P.L. 113–183” infographic](#)
- ▶ [“Pathways to Permanency: Expanding on APPLA Provisions and Youth Engagement to Improve Permanency” tip sheet](#)

Learning Experiences

To access these resources, [create a free CapLEARN account](#). Log in to gain full access to the course catalog including:

- ▶ [Collaborating With the Courts](#) – Presents three e-learning modules on planning strategies for joint initiatives, collaboration in the CQI process, and potential outcomes of collaborative implementation strategies.

- ▶ **State-Tribal Partnerships: Coaching to ICWA Compliance** – Provides a curriculum for conducting a three-day in-person training on building relationships to support ICWA compliance.

Related Resources

- ▶ **Child and Family Services Review: How Judges, Court Administrators, and Attorneys Should Be Involved** (Capacity Building Center for Courts)
- ▶ **Collaboration With the Courts** (Child Welfare Information Gateway)
- ▶ **How and Why to Involve the Courts in Your Child and Family Services Review: Suggestions for Agency Administrators** (Capacity Building Center for Courts)
- ▶ **Tribal-State Partnership Toolkit** (Capacity Building Center for Tribes)

Partner Organizations

- ▶ **Capacity Building Center for Tribes** – Collaborates with American Indian and Alaska Native nations to strengthen tribal child and family systems in order to nurture the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families.
- ▶ **Capacity Building Center for Courts** – Focuses on building the capacity of Court Improvement Programs to improve child welfare practice in courts and the legal community.

^[1] <http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/deliveringpromise.pdf>

^[2] State-Tribe Learning Experience curriculum

^[3] <http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/deliveringpromise.pdf>