

## Preparing for the FY 2005-2009 Tribal Child and Family Services Plan

The following is an advisement to Tribes of the need to engage in the preparation of their FY 2005-2009 Child and Family Services Plans (CFSPs). For Tribes, the CFSP consists of the Child Welfare Services program (title IV-B, Subpart 1) and, if eligible, the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program (title IV-B, Subpart 2). The new FY 2005-2009 CFSPs are due to the ACF Regional Office on June 30, 2004. This will be the third time 5-year plans have been submitted. Tribes should have already begun the process necessary to review and renew their CFSP. This initial guidance is being provided to begin the process now, and will be followed by more specific instructions to be included in a Program Instruction (PI) from the Children's Bureau.

With this in mind, the Children's Bureau would like to put forth some suggestions in regard to the visioning, assessment and consultation/ coordination, joint planning, training, and assurances areas of the CFSP in an effort to have Tribes pay special attention to them during the planning process.

**Visioning:** Visioning means the ability to "see" or envision exactly where we want to go and why we need to get there. Visioning enables an agency to review the potential effects of current and projected forces/issues, define and assess core competencies and values, develop desired future scenarios and begin to plot a strategy for achieving its vision for the future.

Visioning and goal setting are important aspects of the CFSP. We are reintroducing this concept in order to direct Tribes towards revisiting and, if appropriate, revising their past written vision statements. As it was in the other years of planning for the CFSP, it continues to be our strong expectation that Tribes will take advantage of this opportunity to review their visions in order to ensure that they remain valid, practical and timely and that they continue to move the Tribes' child welfare systems forward toward positive, integrated services for Tribal children and their families.

**Assessment:** An assessment is a product developed by gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information to identify resources, strengths, motivation, functional components, and other factors at a point in time that can be used to enhance functioning and promote growth.

A basic assessment involves three steps:

- 1) Gather information on agency operations and performance that currently exists from both internal and external sources. These include data reports from other agencies (i.e., Head Start community assessments, childcare, juvenile justice, and social service agency statistics).

Agencies should expand available information with newer information, as needed (i.e., conduct surveys or focus groups, feedback from community meetings and forums, etc.).

2) Analyze and synthesize the information (i.e. utilize the broader planning groups in order to determine agency strengths and weaknesses based on the information gathered). There is a requirement at 45 CFR 1357.16(e) to analyze the Tribe's progress toward accomplishing the goals and objectives of the 5-year plan and to submit a final report along with the new CFSP. This process will also help the Tribes to examine their previous goals and utilize that knowledge when determining the goals of the next 5-year plan.

3) Draw conclusions, hypotheses, and assumptions about what steps the agency can take to impact these areas.

If the agency already knows what goals they want to focus on, the Tribal assessment can be focused on targeted areas. For example, Tribal child welfare agencies may see a need to work more closely with their Tribal courts, collaborate more with the State child welfare agency, reduce the number of children in out of home placement, etc.

**Consultation/ Coordination:** The consultation and coordination pieces of the CFSP are the combined internal and external processes used to obtain broad and active involvement of major actors in the Tribes' development of their child and family service delivery systems.

This upcoming CFSP year, we are asking Tribes to pay special attention to the consultative/ coordinative aspects of CFSP requirements. It is important to remember that joint planning and consultative coordination is a process, not an end result only to be dealt with when CFSPs are due. These processes should be used as an opportunity for shared insight about the collective direction in which Tribes should move.

Please bear in mind that the CFSP requires consultation and coordination. The CFSP must be jointly developed with the ACF Regional Office and the Tribal agency must consult with appropriate public and nonprofit private agencies and community-based organizations including representatives of other Federal or federally assisted child and family services or related programs.

Tribes should currently be incorporating other members of the broader social welfare community into coordination/collaboration processes not only for system assessment input, but also as a better way of doing business.

There are numerous opportunities for Tribes and States to collaborate in the planning for children and families. According to the regulations at 45 CFR 1357.15(q), States must jointly develop with the Tribe, the arrangements made for the provision of the child welfare services and protections in section 422 (b)(10) to Indian children under both State and Tribal jurisdiction. States are required to consult with Tribes regarding older youth according to the Foster Care Independence Act. It specifically includes a Tribal consultation requirement at section 477(B) (3) (G) of the Act by requiring States to certify ...“that each Indian tribe in the State has been consulted about the programs to be carried out under the plan that there have been efforts to coordinate the programs with

such tribes...”. The Tribes should also be involved in the States’ self assessment for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and the planning for services improvement through the State’s Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The Tribes and States also must exchange copies of their CFSP’s.

**Joint planning:** Joint planning is an ongoing partnership in the process of planning that takes place between Tribal and Federal staff, and the assembled CFSP planning team. Joint planning includes discussions, consultation, and negotiation, between these parties in all areas of CFSP creation. (See 45 CFR 1357.10-Definitions)

It is important to work jointly with the Tribal liaison from your ACF Regional Office early on in the process and in an on-going manner in order to present the best results on the CFSPs. Emphasis should be placed on the ACF Tribal Liaison and the Tribe Agency Administrator working jointly on: 1) selecting participants for their Tribal plan development team and determining their orientation needs, 2) developing their work plan, including the review and analysis of the current CFSP, the timelines needed to meet the June 30 submittal deadline, etc. 3) documenting assurances and selecting preliminary unmet needs to be addressed in the plan, and 4) specifying the new 5-year goals and objectives.

Please bear in mind that the concept of joint planning is essential. We urge Tribes to think of this collaboration as a process to assist Tribes throughout the analysis of the old plan and the planning, development, and implementation steps of the new 5-year CFSP.

**Assurances:** Assurances are the written guarantees and certifications that all the elements included in the CFSP are the Tribe’s actual intended plan of action.

We would like to remind Tribes of the importance of the assurances sections of their plans. The upcoming PI will list details on assurances from 45 CFR 1357.15(c) and title IV-B sections 422(b)(10), 422(b)(12), and 432(a)(9).

Tribes have the opportunity to update their certification numbers to reflect the number of children under age 21 in their populations. Tribes must send a statement certifying the revised numbers of children who have not reached their twenty-first birthday and providing a justification for the revision to their Regional Office. This certification must be signed by the Tribal enrollment officer and the Tribal president/ chairperson and is due with the plan submittal by June 30th. Because grant amounts for both States and Tribes will be affected by the revisions, the Regional Office may ask for additional verification/ documentation if the numbers vary significantly from the Census or previous data.

This message is intended to encourage Tribes to focus their current efforts on the planning process for the CFSP. The upcoming PI will provide more detailed guidance to Tribes on all aspects of the CFSP requirements.