

# *Thank you*

for your decision to be a placement provider for an Alaska Native/American Indian child. Even though foster care is temporary, you have an opportunity to nurture a child which will have a lasting impact on their life.

Through your understanding and embracing of ICWA, the youth in your care will achieve better outcomes and have an easier transition back home or to a family member if reunification is not able to occur (pending identification of the highest preference placement possible).

## **The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA, 25 U.S.C., § 1901-3)**

ICWA stands for the Indian Child Welfare Act, which is federal law passed in 1978. ICWA was passed in response to the alarmingly high number of Indian children being removed from their homes by both public and private agencies and placed in non-Indian foster and adoptive homes and institutions. The intent of Congress under ICWA was to “protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families” (25 U.S.C. § 1902). ICWA sets federal requirements that apply to state child custody proceedings involving a child who is either 1) a member of an Indian Tribe; or 2) eligible for membership in an Indian Tribe and is the biological child of a member of an Indian Tribe.

As ICWA states, “there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children” (25 U.S.C. § 1901)

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**INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT**



## **Placements of Alaska Native/American Indian Children**

*Embracing the spirit and values of  
the Indian Child Welfare Act*



# Thank you for your decision to foster an Alaska Native American Indian child

## Foster Care Placement Preferences

In any foster-care placement of an Indian child, the child must be placed in the least-restrictive setting that most closely approximates a family; takes into consideration sibling attachment; allows the child's special needs (if any) to be met; and is in reasonable proximity to the child's home, extended family, or siblings.

Unless the child's Tribe has established a different order of preference, preference must be given, in descending order as listed below, to placement with:

1. A member of the Indian child's extended family;
2. A foster home that is licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's Tribe;
3. An Indian foster home licensed or approved by an authorized non-Indian licensing authority; or
4. An institution for children approved by an Indian Tribe or operated by an Indian organization which has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs.

## Adoptive Placement Preferences

In any adoptive placement of an Indian child, unless the child's Tribe has established a different order of preference, preference must be given, in descending order as listed below, to placement with:

1. A member of the Indian child's extended family;
2. Members of the Indian child's Tribe;
3. Other Indian families.

**OCS is committed to complying with the ICWA preference placements and conducting an on-going diligent search to identify the highest preference placement possible. With child well-being in mind, the goal is for every child to maintain life-long connections to their family, community, and culture.**

## What you can do to help:

- Ask the child in your care about their family and other people who are important to them
- If a child in your care identifies any possible placement options or supports, notify the OCS worker as soon as possible
- If an ICWA preference placement is identified, support the child in your care through a successful transition, explore options for maintaining an ongoing relationship with you and your family
- Support the healthy racial and ethnic identity of the youth in your care –attend a Knowing Who You Are workshop
- Consult Alaska Center for Resource Families website for ICWA resources and regular training regarding ICWA
- Understand that ICWA is not a race-based law, it is based on a political status and a government-to-government relationship
- Embrace that ICWA is in the best interest of the child

