



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

ECONOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

DSHS ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY 7.01

JULY 1, 2023 TO JUNE 30, 2024 - PLAN & PROGRESS REPORT

ESA HEADQUARTERS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the DSHS Economic Services Administration (ESA) is *to transform lives by connecting children, adults, and families to the resources and opportunities that help them reach their full potential*. ESA's unified goal is to reduce the number of individuals and families living in poverty by 50 percent by 2025 in a way that eliminates disparities. This is an ambitious goal; one that is achieved one family at a time, one individual at a time. A Washington without poverty and injustice is a future in which all Washingtonians have their foundational needs met and the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. To succeed, ESA is focusing on: Human-centered service delivery, Human-centered employee supports, Operational excellence and Partnerships. ESA can best accomplish its mission and unifying goal by developing, expanding and nurturing strategic relationships with key state, federal, tribal, local and community partners that serve shared customers. ESA's strong working relationships and partnerships with Indian Nations and Recognized American Indian Organizations (RAIO) are critical in successfully reducing poverty.

This Executive Summary highlights some of the ESA Headquarters state/tribal work and activities to reduce poverty, eliminate barriers, strengthen government-to-government relationships and partnerships, and improve services to individuals, children, and families. Our 2023-2024 7.01 Plans will be available here: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/division-child-support/washington-state-tribal-policy>.

We have also linked our 2022 ESA Briefing Book (<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/manuals/briefing-book>), which is an excellent reference guide to our programs, client demographics, caseloads and expenditures, and includes an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our programs and services.

A. Office of the Assistant Secretary (OAS)

The OAS Statewide Tribal Relations Administrator (STRA) coordinates tribal activities to ensure timely, consistent, and respectful interactions between ESA and tribes, in order to improve services for the individuals and families we mutually serve. The OAS STRA works with Executive Leadership, DCS and CSD Headquarters Tribal Program Leads, ESA Regional and Field Office staff, and the Office of Indian Policy (OIP) to strengthen our government-to-government relationships with tribes and assist with state/tribal communications, coordination, partnerships and intergovernmental agreements.

The OAS STRA provides structural and organizational assistance in leading ESA's state/tribal efforts and in managing an ESA Tribal Relations SharePoint site for OAS, CSD, and DCS Headquarters to better store, organize, and track state/tribal work, meetings, communications, and negotiations.

To further improve ESA communications, coordination, and negotiations with Tribal TANF programs, the OAS STRA leads and facilitates (as needed) a Tribal TANF Workgroup of subject matter experts from

OAS, Budget, Fiscal, Accounting and Internal Control, CSD Tribal, CSD Communications and Community Relations, and the DSHS Office of Indian Policy. The OAS STRA also helps track state/tribal actions and correspondence.

The OAS STRA is ESA's lead contact with OIP, co-chair and facilitator of the quarterly Indian Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC) ESA Subcommittee meeting, and ESA's lead for the Governor's Tribal Leaders Social Services Council (GTLSSC), IPAC and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA).

In an effort to increase ESA staff awareness and knowledge of tribal sovereignty and state/tribal relations and partnerships, OAS STRA manages the ESA Tribal SharePoint page for all staff that includes links to tribal relations staff, useful websites, key policies, state/tribal intergovernmental agreements, articles and other resources. OAS STRA continues to oversee tribal-related ESA News articles and provide, schedule and advertise ongoing staff and management training regarding state/tribal relations, tribal sovereignty, tribal culture and government-to-government principles and partnerships. The OAS STRA provides tribal training at the ESA Leadership Academy, and is available (with the CSD HQ Tribal Relations Program Administrator) to provide tribal training at CSD Regional and Call Center Skill Builder's Classes and at CSD Regional Expanded Leadership Teams (*as requested*).

ESA's traditional annual National Native American Heritage Month (NNAHM) celebration held at the Capital View 1 Building each November, has been postponed since 2020. Typically, DCS, CSD, and OAS host this popular annual celebration, and additional celebrations have been held in ESA offices around the state. ESA recognizes the importance of NNAHM activities in helping to raise cultural awareness and cultural competency of all ESA staff. Since 2020, instead of office-specific NNAHM events, ESA, CSD and DCS have hosted a series of "DSHS Tribal Talks" featuring a variety of presenters. These highly-regarded sessions have been very well-attended, and recorded versions are available to state staff via the Learning Center. Due to their popularity, DCS, CSD and ESA will continue hosting more web talks later this year. Our DSHS Tribal Talks began in November 2020 with these three Tribal Talks: *Lushootseed Language and Coast Salish Tribal Culture*, *Children of the Setting Sun Productions*, and *Traditional Storytelling and Current Life Experiences for Urban Indians*. In 2021, ESA held the following six DSHS Tribal Talks: *Surviving Assimilation: One Native American family's story of identify suppression and revitalization*; *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA People*; *Native American Cultural Competency – A BHA Policy*; *Considerations for Indigenous Language Revitalization for Indigenous Tribes*; *A Long Time Ago, When the Earth Was Young: An Indigenous Perspective of the History of the Chehalis Tribes*; and *DSHS OIP: Tribal Relationships and So Much More*. In 2022, ESA provided these two DSHS Tribal Talks: *Utilizing a Historical Context to Support Indigenous Communities* and *Serving Indigenous Communities Through Skill Development and the Cultural Iceberg*.

As needed, the OAS STRA works with ESA Tribal TANF Workgroup members, tribes, CSD HQ and Regional leadership and tribal liaisons, and sometimes ACF Region 10, and the ESA Assistant Secretary, to facilitate the finalization of numerous State/Tribal Intergovernmental Agreements (Tribal TANF IGAs, Tribal TANF Operating Agreements, and ACES/SEMS Web Data Share Agreements).

ESA continues to implement process improvement recommendations made by the ACES and SEMS Web Project team in an effort to improve the process for tribes to obtain and maintain access and data from

ACES Online and SEMS Web, and ensure: necessary ESA staff are informed, status updates are effectively communicated to tribes, and families are best served.

In various forums (state/tribal meetings, Director meetings, 7.01 meetings, GTLSSC, IPAC and IPAC ESA Subcommittee meetings, and others), ESA meets with tribes to learn from them, discuss ways we can strengthen state/tribal relationships and partnerships, celebrate successes, identify areas of opportunities, and discuss how we can better partner together to reduce the number of individuals and families living in poverty. ESA HQ Tribal Leads continue to track and support the goals and activities identified in ESA 7.01 Plans.

The OAS STRA works with the CSD HQ Tribal Relations Administrator and the 11 Tribal TANF Directors to plan two State/Tribal TANF Director's meetings each year. These meetings continue to be very successful, and provide a great forum to build relationships, strengthen partnerships, share information, provide updates, discuss mutual issues, seek feedback, and brainstorm solutions.

ESA HQ Tribal Leads worked with OIP and IPAC to finalize Bi-Laws and Operational Procedures for the Governor's Tribal Leaders Social Services Council (GTLSSC), and worked with OIP and the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) to prepare ESA and DSHS Leaders with information for the Centennial Accord meeting with the Governor and Tribal Leaders.

Since January 2022, ESA has worked with the Suquamish Tribe to support their interest in applying for federal approval and funding to operate a TANF program. In March 2023, the Snoqualmie Tribe also submitted a letter of interest to the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to operate a TANF program. ESA will continue to work closely with both tribe's to support their efforts.

B. Community Services Division (CSD)

The Community Services Division is focused and determined to fulfill ESA's mission to Transform Lives. CSD dedicates its work to creating, maintaining, and growing relationships with tribal governments and communities and working with RAIOS. Guided by the DSHS American Indian Policy 7.01, CSD honors and respects tribal sovereignty using a government-to-government methodology to work with tribal governments and their representatives in policy development, services, and program activities.

CSD continues to work hard toward achieving ESA's goal to reduce poverty by 50 percent by 2025, focusing on doing so in a way that eliminates disparities. DSHS Policy 7.01 provides the template and guidance in documenting CSD's efforts toward this goal. This policy requires the Division to provide accountability and measures of progress on their actions and document how CSD works with a Tribe(s) or RAIIO throughout the year. The 7.01 Plan and Progress Reports help identify gaps in services and opportunities for improvement and highlight accomplishments achieved together over the past year. Tribal Liaisons and Regional Managers with the Office of Indian Policy, OIP, work with Tribes and RAIOS to schedule meetings to discuss and update the 7.01 Plan and Progress Reports. These meetings allow state and tribal leadership to learn about each other's programs and services. The meetings also offer the opportunity for discussion around partnerships, exchanges of ideas, methods of assistance, collaboration opportunities, and successes of the efforts of state and tribe(s) working together in assisting the tribal community.

As health restrictions have been lifted from the COVID-19 Pandemic, CSD shifted the traditional format of conducting bi-annual in-person State Tribal TANF Directors meetings. The meetings have changed from being held virtually via Zoom to offering the opportunity for a hybrid meeting. While in-person

meetings are preferred, TANF Directors appreciate the option to attend in-person or virtually at these meetings. The State Tribal TANF Directors meetings allow increased relationship building and collaborative efforts for innovative service delivery. The discussions have focused on how Tribal TANF programs and services have been impacted by COVID-19, sharing lessons learned and new approaches adopted, and continuing to overcome challenges the pandemic had on providing services.

CSD is focused on collaboration and partnership efforts. In November 2020, CSD requested to expand the Tribal SNAP Eligibility Determination Demonstration Project to other interested Tribes to USDA's Food and Nutrition Services, FNS. CSD developed this Plan with a collaborative workgroup that included the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, which has operated a Tribal SNAP Eligibility Determination Demonstration Project since 2009. In May 2022, FNS responded to CSD's initial request with a denial. Upon review of the feedback provided with the denial, CSD submitted an updated and clarified request to FNS in December 2022. FNS responded to the new request with additional logistical questions from the state and tribes. CSD is working closely with FNS and the interested tribes to provide the requested information. CSD is anticipating FNS approval to expand the Tribal SNAP Eligibility Determination Demonstration Project by June 2023.

In addition to the workgroup to expand Tribal SNAP Eligibility Determination, another CSD workgroup focused on expanding EBT Issuance to Tribal Outstations. This workgroup created policies and procedures to allow CSD staff who are out stationed at tribal social service locations to have the ability to issue EBT cards to eligible customers. As CSD reopened offices and resumed in-person services, select tribal outstations have been granted the opportunity and ability to issue EBT cards onsite at their tribal location by their assigned tribal outstation worker. This workgroup also added CSD's tribal outstation locations to the DSHS Office Locator. The Locator allows clients to locate an office or outstation closest to them to seek services. Each site provides information on specific services and dates and times the tribal outstation is open.

The CSD Tribal Relations Program Administrator works within CSD's Office of Communications and Community Relations. This Administrator assists CSD staff in working government-to-government with tribes and RAIOS and is also responsible for managing and creating new Intergovernmental Agreements between the state and eleven Tribal TANF programs. Two other tribes have expressed their intention and interest in running a tribal TANF program. Accompanying these agreements, the TRPA also monitors the additional Data Share Agreements and Operating Agreements that provide Tribal TANF programs access to customer information within CSD's systems. These local agreements between Tribal TANF programs and regional Community Services Offices, CSOs, describe how they work together to provide the best services for tribal families and individuals.

The Tribal Relations Program Administrator also works directly with CSD staff, including Community Services Office Administrators, Regional CSD Tribal Liaisons, and Local Office Tribal Liaisons, to facilitate meetings and training between state and tribal partners. CSD staff provide information and training to tribal partners in DSHS programs and services, Washington Connection- including setting up Secure Access Washington or SAW accounts and Client Benefit Accounts, and BVS and ACES Online training. In working directly with tribal partners, the Administrator assists in creating and fostering relationships between tribal partners and CSD staff.

CSD continues to support collaboration efforts with tribes and RAIOS. At the tribal outstations, CSD staff determined eligibility and provided numerous other services, such as EBT card issuance. As the COVID-

19 health emergency restrictions are lifted, CSD is resuming many in-person tribal outstations as staffing allows and upon request of tribes and RAIOs.

Some creative methods local Community Services Offices continue to provide tribal partners include providing tribal staff and customers with a direct email and telephone numbers for their local CSD tribal liaison. Direct contacts allow those tribal staff and tribal customers the direct access they are accustomed to receiving in person. Multiple contact methods allow CSO tribal liaisons to create positive and trusting relationships with tribal customers and staff at RAIOs and tribes.

The DSHS Administrative Policy 7.01 collaboration and reporting process supports comprehensive customer service through regular meetings with the twenty-nine federally recognized tribes and several RAIOs that provide services to American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) throughout the state.

CSD shares conferences, training, and job opportunities through regular email communications, and the Office of Indian Policy also share these opportunities with tribal partners. CSD continues to invite tribal partners to be involved in hiring panels to fill key CSD positions.

The Tribal Relations Program Administrator provides information at Indian Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC) meetings and IPAC ESA Subcommittee meetings to keep tribes informed on program development and policy changes that may affect services. The Administrator leads conversations and follow-up from these meetings to research and answer tribal questions and develop enhanced partnerships. The Administrator also reviews proposed legislation to provide feedback on potential impacts on Tribal TANF programs.

Current and future projects for CSD Tribal Relations includes:

- CSD Tribal Relations Workgroup: In collaboration with CSD, OAS, and OIP, a workgroup is being formed to review CSD's current tribal relations work, identify opportunities to strengthen tribal relations, and review best practices on a statewide level and leverage those practices statewide.
- Tribal SNAP Eligibility Determination Demonstration Project Expansion: CSD is anticipating approval from FNS to expand this project to 5 other tribes. Once approval has been granted, CSD will work with tribes to train and help stand-up tribal SNAP outstations.

C. Division of Child Support (DCS)

The Division of Child Support (DCS) maintains government-to-government relationships with tribes in Washington State, respects Tribal sovereignty, and strives to develop and deliver culturally appropriate child support services. To help improve the lives of American Indian and Alaska Native children and families, the DCS Tribal Relations Team (TRT) in collaboration with DCS leadership, statewide tribal liaisons, DCS staff, the 29 federally-recognized tribes in Washington State, and seven Recognized American Indian Organizations (RAIOs) leads DCS' tribal relations efforts. TRT advocates for policies and laws, negotiates agreements, and assists in the development of processes that recognize tribal sovereignty and address the many challenges in the establishment and collection of child support.

Additional information about state/tribal child support efforts and agreements is available on the DCS Tribal Relations website at www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/division-child-support/tribal-relations.

Eight tribes in Washington State operate their own federally-funded child support programs: Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe, Tulalip Tribes, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, Puyallup Tribe,

Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Quinault Indian Nation. Ten tribes and one RAIO also operate tribal TANF programs. Several tribes have expressed interest or taken the first steps towards starting their own tribal TANF or child support programs. DCS has also established, or is working to establish partnerships with other tribes and RAIOs around Washington, as well as with tribes in the bordering states like Idaho and Oregon, and tribal child support programs in Alaska.

Throughout the pandemic, DCS was able to meet virtually and communicate with tribal partners using Microsoft Teams, or Zoom meetings. Still, numerous tribes opted not to meet with DCS this year for 7.01 planning, and those tribes' plans were either approved by the tribe without a 7.01 meeting, or remain in "draft" status awaiting tribal review. DSHS Office of Indian Policy and DCS continue to diligently work on scheduling 7.01 meetings with those tribes who indicate interest.

Agreements

DCS has entered into intergovernmental agreements that provide additional collection tools for tribes, tribal programs and the state alike. For example, some tribes and their businesses have agreed to honor DCS' withholding notices, while Cooperative Agreements with tribal TANF programs permit DCS to offer full child support services to tribal TANF clients. And some agreements with tribes who have *per capita* distributions allow DCS to appear in tribal court to request a portion of the distribution be withheld and applied to child support debt(s).

DCS's Data Sharing Agreements provide selected tribal program staff limited read-only access to State IV-A and IV-D computer data. Tribal staff are able to quickly verify TANF, medical and food benefits, child support payment information, and customer contact information - without having to rely on a state Tribal Liaison, which reduces the delay to benefits and services for customers. DCS Tribal Relations Team staff, along with the CSD State Tribal Relations Administrator, monitor Agreements with 11 Tribal TANF programs and eight Tribal IV-D programs. State staff and ESA's IT experts work often with tribal program and IT staff to ensure system security and connectivity.

TRT also negotiates and monitors Treasury Offset Agreements with six Washington State Tribal IV-D programs and one out-of-state Tribal IV-D Program. Offset Agreements allow DCS to certify child support debts to the federal government on behalf of tribal IV-D programs for offset from IRS tax refunds or other federal administrative funds. Offset Agreements result in monies, that wouldn't otherwise be available to tribes, reaching tribal families.

Tribal Liaisons

Those DCS cases with tribal connections are assigned to specially trained DCS Tribal Liaisons in field offices around the state. An additional 15 staff in Policy (4 staff), IT (1), Central Services (2 staff), the DCS Virtual Legal Office (5) and the DCS Director's Office (3) regularly review issues relating to DCS's tribal relations efforts. Liaisons manage tribal cases and serve as the local points-of-contact for tribes in their region. They also provide outreach, training (including "Child Support 101") and technical assistance, and educate DCS staff about tribal policy and processes. DCS encourages Liaisons and staff to participate at tribal events to increase cultural awareness and experience, build trust, strengthen partnerships, and improve service delivery to tribal communities. At the invitation of their tribal partners, Tribal Liaisons have attended and participated in tribal Pow Wows, annual Canoe Journey days, tribal health fairs, job fairs, and conferences. As the COVID pandemic wanes, Liaisons are transitioning from virtual participation, and coordinating with DCS leadership to resume in-person attendance at meetings and events again.

Tribal Liaisons also attend the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs’ Government-to-Government training and the DSHS Office of Indian Policy’s 7.01 training, and have been permitted to “listen in” to annual Centennial Accord meetings, as well as the Governor’s Tribal Leaders Social Services Council meetings. Liaisons often participate in and take minutes for their regional 7.01 meetings as well.

Tribal Liaison Meetings

The Tribal Relations Team hosts a quarterly conference call with DCS Tribal Liaisons from around the state. This call serves to update Liaisons of policy and procedural changes, and provides an opportunity to recognize successes and discuss challenges. TRT is planning to host a DCS Tribal Liaison in-person meeting in 2023 as well. Invitees to these in-person meetings have included presenters and staff from Washington tribes and tribal programs, OCSE, ESA, CSD, the Oregon Child Support Program and the Oregon Department of Justice. Attendees have shared best practices, agency updates and project highlights.

TRT also provides an on-boarding “check-in” meeting and training plan for new Tribal Liaisons, Program Managers, or any DCS staff who interact with Tribal programs, or who are involved with tribal cases. The training is scheduled about 60 days after hiring and includes an introduction to historical resource documents, DCS tribal policy, links to internet resources and other information around state and tribal relations. The invitation to participate in the 60-day follow up is extended to the entire Tribal Team.

Bi-Annual DCS/Tribal IV-D Directors Roundtable Meeting

DCS’s Director and Policy staff meet with the eight Tribal Child Support Directors twice annually to discuss legislative proposals, policies and processes, budget and program issues, and other topics. DCS hosted meetings with the Tribal IV-D Directors on September 20, 2022 and April 12, 2023. Tribal Directors received detailed information regarding Conference Board (an informal hearing conducted by a DCS attorney) requests and decisions and reporting regarding tribal case referrals and inappropriate enforcement actions taken on tribal cases (such as a withholding notice being sent to a tribal business). The Directors’ group continues to collaborate on challenges posed from credit-bureau reporting of debts on tribal cases. A DCS pilot project with several of the tribal IV-D programs is underway to evaluate and gather data on the effectiveness of this tool on child support collections.

Tribes have also expressed concerns with federally-required DCS documentation informing parents of their rights to a child support order modification. Modification procedures can vary for parents who have an order established by a tribal jurisdiction. DCS is in the process of revising some of the documentation sent to parents and is seeking additional tribal input and feedback.

DCS/Tribal IV-D Director-level 7.01 Plan

A Directors-level 7.01 Plan was established to capture the meaningful work being done at the semi-annual Directors Roundtable meetings. Originally suggested by the Directors’ group itself, this plan memorializes higher-level objectives, policies and activities that encourage state and tribal cooperation in the development of child support related legislation. Procedures that affect American Indians and Alaska Natives are also often discussed. Progress is reported at a statewide level.

Tribal and DCS Participation on Hiring Panels

DCS seeks tribal representation in processes to hire for key positions that involve working with Tribes and Recognized American Indian Organizations, and welcomes tribal input and suggestions during the

development of interview questions and the interviews themselves. DCS has been fortunate to have representatives from tribes often share suggestions and participate on interview panels. Additionally, DCS, like DSHS, encourages diversity and inclusion and equal opportunities for all. We regularly share statewide employment announcements from within the Division, as well as from other administrations and organizations, with our tribal contacts and sister agencies.

ACES Online / SEMS Web Access

DCS Tribal Relations and IT staff continue to work with tribal counterparts in obtaining and maintaining access to ACES Online and SEMS Web. The process to request and activate access is multi-layered and often requires simultaneous involvement of the tribal program user, tribal IT staff, and ESA IT staff. TRT has worked successfully with these individuals to set up access for numerous tribal users, and will continue to help facilitate the process and troubleshoot access issues for tribal partners.

Covid-19 Impacts and Effects

With the rescission of the state's public health emergency in October 2022, and the end of the federal health emergency guidelines in 2023, many DCS staff have been able to begin working a hybrid model that includes in-home telework and in-office presence. Tribal Relations staff will continue to rely on the speed and convenience of email, telephone and virtual meeting technology to stay connected to colleagues and tribal partners, but are also very much looking forward to meeting in-person with our customers again as those opportunities become available.