

TRIBAL COVID-19 PRESS CONFERENCE TALKING POINTS

- Even before COVID-19, tribal human services, were already stretched thin. Human services programs in tribal communities are on the front lines providing care and protection to vulnerable children, adults and families. There is no flexibility or margin for error for delaying critical services that are the lifeline for many tribal citizens.
- Safety for tribal front-line staff is being challenged in this COVID-19 environment who are responsible for engaging with tribal citizens in their communities and homes. Those that we have talked with are concerned about their ability to help children, families, and older adults adjust to COVID-19 protocols and secure critical services.
- For example, in child protection services front line workers are reporting increased calls from families who are dealing with difficult challenges related to work and school changes. Service providers, like private or state-run residential care facilities, have contacted tribes telling them they may need to come and pick up tribal citizens who are in care if facilities reduce numbers or have to close.
- Tribes also play a key role in helping case manage and provide services to tribal citizens in state human service systems. State and local services rely on tribes to help guide treatment and service decisions so tribal citizens can achieve the maximum benefits.
- Unemployment, already high in many tribal communities, is also a concern for tribal human service programs as many of the care providers, such as foster care families. Loss of employment can disrupt out of home placements for children and cause further trauma to children and family members.
- NICWA is holding a series of webinars that started this week focused on helping tribal service providers access resources and meet challenges due to COVID-19. This includes convening tribal human service providers to identify unique service delivery issues and resources and collaborating on solutions to address these. We are also working closely with our Native and non-Native partners to collaborate on opportunities to partner on outreach to policymakers and education between our constituency groups. We have

also developed a series of policy responses to support tribal human services programs and protect continuity of care for tribal citizens.