

## TRIBAL CHILD & FAMILY WELLNESS DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Under the tenants of the Indian Child Welfare Act, and involving instances of state initiated court proceedings and state initiated custody matters;

The Narragansett Tribal Child & family Services department provides consultation and advocacy services,

- based within cultural practices and understandings of tribal kinship, cooperatively with federal and organic law and
- in the best interest of the overall well-being of tribal children enrolled with the Narragansett Indian Tribe
- and other enrolled federally recognized tribal members residing within the state of Rhode Island.
- Family Violence & Domestic Violence Prevention and Survivors Advocacy / consultation services are also offered through the department.
- Community / professional based workshops (when available)for Indigenous people and allies as well as various providers, surrounding family wellness & cultural preservation, women's wellness, cultural resources awareness for providers and community as well as other areas tribal organic law and practices.

The NTCFW department contact information is by mail the same as the NIT mailing address.

email: [n.tcfs.dept@outlook.com](mailto:n.tcfs.dept@outlook.com), phone: 401.364.9500

**Please note that for the safety and well-being of our clients as well as our staff members, the department employs written and/or audio recorded communication methods, including instances where individuals will be informed of phone communications happening on a recorded line.**

**The department is not a replacement for or an intercedence of actions or behaviors resulting in involvements with any state children youth and family agencies. The TCFS department is also not responsible for general assistance supportive services, social services, general healthcare or mental health services, general education or general housing services... each of those are respectfully overseen by their associated tribal departments.**

So, what exactly is the ICWA?

As cited from the Department of the Interior – Indian Affairs the purpose of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is "...to protect the best interest of Indian Children and to promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families by the establishment of minimum Federal standards for the removal of Indian children and placement of such children in homes which will reflect the unique values of Indian culture..."(25 U.S. C. 1902). ICWA provides guidance to States regarding the handling of child abuse and neglect and adoption cases involving Native children and sets minimum standards for the handling of these cases.

**In simpler terms, ICWA is the basis of federal law which allows for federally recognized tribes to intervene in areas involving state custody proceedings and in the best interest of their**

**enrolled minor tribal citizens, where the history of removal and forced assimilation of Indigenous children once allowed tribal children to be farmed out by non-tribal governments and private agencies to anyone, anywhere and forcefully assimilated and/or acculturated out of Indigenous existence by these institutions.**

ICWA does not apply to custody disputes between parents or family members (such as in divorce, child support proceedings), juvenile delinquency proceedings based on crimes that would be criminal even if the child was an adult (e.g., theft), or to cases under tribal court jurisdiction. **ICWA IS NOT RACE BASED!** ICWA cannot be used to enforce parental rights in the absence of state initiated proceedings based upon the RACE of parents.

ICWA only applies in state court child welfare proceedings and adoption proceedings. ICWA doesn't apply to custody disputes between parents or biological guardians.

For more immediate general information for families with basic questions the below link may initially provide context and response.

Please Remember information including the applications of the Indian Child Welfare Act laws are public record and accessible to everyone.

[www.nicwa.org](http://www.nicwa.org) provides in depth info and answers to frequently asked questions.

[For Families & Service Providers » NICWA](#)