

# **Analysis Plan for Three Related Studies of Tribal ACF Programs**

April 2013

## Introduction

American Indians and Alaska Natives are important participants in programs administered by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) governments are important partners in administering these programs. ACF funds tribal organizations to provide family financial assistance, child support, child care, Head Start, child welfare, and other programs with the goal of promoting the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.<sup>1</sup> Because American Indian and Alaska Native communities are unique, ACF has made an intentional effort to learn more about how ACF programs assist tribal communities and how tribal communities administer programs.

ACF recognizes tribal sovereignty and the importance of fostering the trust relationship with American Indian and Alaska Native communities and recognizes the sensitivity of collaborating with AI/AN populations on research. ACF has made considerable efforts to consult with Tribal governments, service providers and community stakeholders through tribal consultation. The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within ACF currently has four such studies underway. Two are exploratory studies of specific populations or programs, and two are studies linked to ACF grants to tribal organizations.

## Purpose

As requested by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the Office of Management and Budget, this document describes the collaboration and planning around three of the four Tribal studies. As discussed with OIRA, the Understanding Urban Indians Interactions with ACF Programs and Services Study<sup>2</sup> is not included in this analysis plan because the study focuses on urban areas, involves organizations and populations not located on tribal reservations and will not overlap with the tribal settings involved in the other studies underway.

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<sup>1</sup> As sovereign entities, many tribes have increasingly taken control of programs that serve tribal members. Over the past 20 years, the federal government has increasingly supported tribal self-governance and self-determination. Indian tribes and tribal consortia have been explicitly included in federal initiatives such as TANF, Welfare-to-Work (WtW) grants, the Native Employment Works (NEW) program, the Child Care Development Fund, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Child Welfare Coordination Grants, Vocational Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation Grants. Congress and federal agencies administering these programs have supported Indian self-determination and tribal consultation in formulating legislative provisions and in developing policies and regulations. Legislation and regulations permit tribes to operate programs and, in recognition of their special circumstances, allow some degree of flexibility in program operation.

<sup>2</sup> This exploratory descriptive study is attempting to lay the groundwork for future study and to enable ACF to understand the barriers of access to ACF services among AI/AN populations living in urban areas and their unmet social service needs.

### **Collaboration - Planning**

OPRE staff who oversee research in tribal communities meet monthly to share information about work in these communities and the principal investigators of the studies share relevant information. Federal and contractor staff shared information about site selection and measurement development during the planning phases of these studies. In addition, the 2012 ACF Welfare Research and Evaluation Conference included a session on *Engaging Tribal Communities in Research*, during which the principal investigators of three of the current ACF research projects presented information on the purpose of their studies and discussed strategies to engage tribes in research.

This initial planning allowed teams to identify any overlap in site selection. Two sites are in both the study of the Coordination of Tribal TANF Child Welfare Grants (CTTCW) and the Tribal TANF study and one site is part of both the Tribal Health Professionals Opportunities study and the Coordination of Tribal TANF Child Welfare study. In each case, the studies are examining separate grant programs and with specific programmatic requirements and objectives. Additionally, each study is distinct in its purpose and design. Regardless, the principal investigators for the studies shared information about the timing of their visits, and site visitors are aware that the tribes are participating in both studies.

### **Collaboration - Information Collection**

The attached matrix highlights each of the ACF studies that target American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations. Although they are distinct, and represent different programs within ACF, these studies coordinate and inform each other.

In order to prevent undue burden, OPRE reviewed instruments and protocols from each of the studies to determine if there were any common constructs similar enough to warrant examining the possibility of excluding certain demographic and administrative questions for any of the three sites that are participating in more than one study.

The matrix illustrates common constructs between the studies and highlights cases where three sites have been involved in more than one study. In these cases, a review of the instruments was conducted. For instance, the Coordination of Tribal TANF Child Welfare study is examining demographic and administrative data collected by the other studies in the same sites to determine if responses are up to date, and therefore not necessary to collect for the descriptive study.

### **Collaboration - Moving Forward**

Future ACF research projects involving tribal communities will benefit from knowledge gained from these studies and the relationships fostered through the collaboration. ACF anticipates

continuing to engage with tribal communities on research of mutual interest that increases understanding of ACF programs, moves the field forward through participatory research and demonstrates how tribal-government program interactions can be improved.