

Spotlight On: Working With American Indian Tribes – transcript

Presenters: Angela Green, Children's Bureau Regional Program Manager, Region 5, Chicago; Charisse Johnson, Program Specialist, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, Washington, DC; Irene Carrillo, Children's Bureau Program Specialist, Region 5, Chicago; Cindy Lowder, Children's Bureau Program Specialist, Region 5, Chicago; Ruby Flagg, Children's Bureau Program Specialist, Region 5, Chicago; Junius Scott, Children's Bureau Regional Program Manager, Region 2, New York

Angela Green: [00:00:11:28] We believe it's equally important in the services that we provide and support that we provide our States that we also provide our Tribes. We have specialists that work directly with them that are also asking and seeing what is needed, you know? If it's a relationship with your State, how can we help build that relationship with your State? There have been many creative things that we've been able to do with the support of our Tribes, and that's through the communication with the Tribes. It's been a beautiful thing to witness, to see how they have really accepted our guidance and support and they reach out to us.

Charisse Johnson: [00:00:44:00] I work primarily with the Tribal Home Visiting Program and as you know, the Tribes--just like many other populations--have a lot of issues that they're dealing with in order to improve outcomes for children and their families. So what we do, we work with the Tribes in a very specific way to identify and address their community needs, to implement programs that have been found to improve outcomes for children and families in hopes that children will grow and develop and meet their developmental milestones.

Cindy Lowder: [00:01:14:03] We know that child welfare is important to the Tribes, and they are very interested in providing good care for their children. And the Children's Bureau, we're here to help them to reach their goals, to envision their mission, and we try to assist them in any way we can. And we have lots of tools that can help us do that--through grants and through T and TA--and so we try to really work with them on those available resources.

Irene Carrillo: [00:01:51:21] We always are working hard to try to keep aware of who the new Tribal directors are, who their grant writers are, so as Federal laws change, we can reach out to them and make them aware of the programs that they're eligible to apply for.

One of the unique things that our region does is we have organized our staff so that we have the child welfare specialist who works with the State also working with the Tribes within that State, and I think that's very unique to this region.

Ruby Flagg: [00:02:24:13] It allows us to not only work individually with the Tribe but to know what's going on with the State and allow that to be a pass-through to let the individual Tribes know exactly what's going on, what's happening with their State, how that intertwines, and just that communication in itself is so important.

Irene Carrillo: [00:02:43:04] A good point that comes up, though, too, is that we're always trying to help the Tribes reach out to each other directly. Every opportunity we have at the regional level, we're trying to bring the Tribes from all three States together, so we're always trying to encourage the peer-to-peer learning.

We definitely want the Tribes to learn to maximize the use of the funds we give them and to be very creative because in some cases the funds are limited, so we really want to get that money to the people who need it the most.

Ruby Flagg: [00:03:13:15] We want them to use it to the utmost, to whatever point that they can, to make sure that they're servicing the children and families.

Junius Scott: [00:03:21:12] Our program specialist that works with the Tribes has to come to understand a whole history of Tribal experience that is very different from New York State as a State Government or even Puerto Rico as a community that is Spanish speaking. And so there are a lot of cultural influences in the Tribal nations that we need to learn about and understand and respect in a way that we can help that Tribal nation serve its community in the context of child welfare practice as we are trying to influence it across the country.

[end audio]