

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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ND Child Support Program recognized for collaboration with tribal child support programs

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Child Support Division recently received the *2017 Partnership Award* from the National Tribal Child Support Association for its collaboration with tribal child support programs in accessing federal offset payments that support tribal children and families.

"Partnerships with other jurisdictions are vital in child support. Borders shouldn't be barriers when it comes to supporting children and families," said Jim Fleming, the state's child support director.

In 2014, the Child Support Division began discussions with several tribes and North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission Executive Director Scott Davis on creating a consortium of tribal child support programs that would work together through North Dakota to collect federal offset payments from parents who owe past-due support in tribal child support cases. These payments include income tax refunds, federal retirement payments, Conservation Reserve Program payments, and other federal offset payments.

Currently, the consortium includes the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in North and South Dakota, the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe in Wisconsin and the Chippewa-Cree Tribe in Montana. Other tribes are considering joining the consortium. To participate, tribes need to have an approved IV-D program.

"Child support is a network of programs that collaborate as parents move from place to place," Fleming said. "North Dakota has parents and children all over the country, so by assisting tribes, it helps foster a stronger partnership among all child support programs."

Fleming added that North Dakota has a highly-automated process for submitting the names of parents who owe past-due support for federal offset. He said until there is a change to federal law that allows tribal child support programs to participate directly in the federal offset program, the consortium is a creative way to strengthen the network of child support programs so all children and families are served.

The Child Support Division was nominated for this award by the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Child Support Program.

"We are so grateful for this partnership because of the difference it is making in the lives of our children," said Sunnie Bisonette, lead child support specialist with the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Child Support Program. "In less than two years, our tribal families have received over \$140,000 in actual payments and child support income in their households because of the consortium."

The National Tribal Child Support Association is a non-profit organization that partners with tribal, state and federal professionals to improve the quality of life for Indian children through communication, training and public awareness.

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