

# Child Welfare & Research in Tribal Communities

## State of Child Welfare

- [Indian Child Welfare Act](#) (ICWA) has helped to lower the number of American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children in the welfare system
- **AI/AN children are *still* disproportionately represented in the welfare system**, therefore more needs to be done.
- Some **states have passed legislation that is more inclusive and outlines specifically what compliance with ICWA means**, [Washington State](#) has some of the most progressive legislation on this topic.

## How can Child Welfare be Improved?

- **Expand the definition of American Indian Child** to include tribal descendants, members of state historic tribes, and Canadian First Nation children who are US residents
- **Establish agreed upon guidelines** regarding how to manage cases when jurisdiction is shared between state and tribe.
- **Create advisory committees** at the state level that work to ensure compliance with ICWA. AI/NA individuals should be involved heavily in these committees.

## Challenges in Research

- A **distrust** of the researcher and their intentions. Often due to past incidents like [ASU and the Havasupai Tribe](#).
- A lack of understanding of **historical context and tribal culture**
- A **lack of involvement and understanding** between the researcher and the tribal community

## How to Improve Research Relations

- **Include communities in every step of the research process**. This includes planning, executing, disseminating and [implementing](#) the study.
- **Include AI/NA individuals in policy** making regarding their communities
- **Ensure that researchers are educated** regarding tribal culture and historical context(s)

## Key Takeaways

1. ICWA has been working to decrease AI/NA children in care, but it needs to continue to improve.
2. More specific guidelines in ICWA could help to improve AI/NA children's welfare
3. Tribal communities should be included in every step of both research and policy.

## Helpful Resources

- DHHS [suggestions](#) for tribal-state child welfare
- [Outline](#) of how to ensure tribal communities are involved in each step
- Tribal Information Exchange's [resources](#) on child welfare
- Tribal Institute's [legal information](#) regarding ICWA