

Promoting the Development and Maintenance of Successful Tribal Foster Care and Adoption Programs

NATIONAL CHILD
WELFARE RESOURCE
CENTER FOR TRIBES



A Service of the Children's Bureau, a member of the National T/TA Network

Presented By

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Purpose of Webinar

- Series of recommendations informed by the findings of the NRC4Tribes Needs Assessment
- Not less than one webinar per recommendation
- This webinar:
 - **Recommendation 4:** Promote the development and maintenance of successful tribal foster care and adoption programs

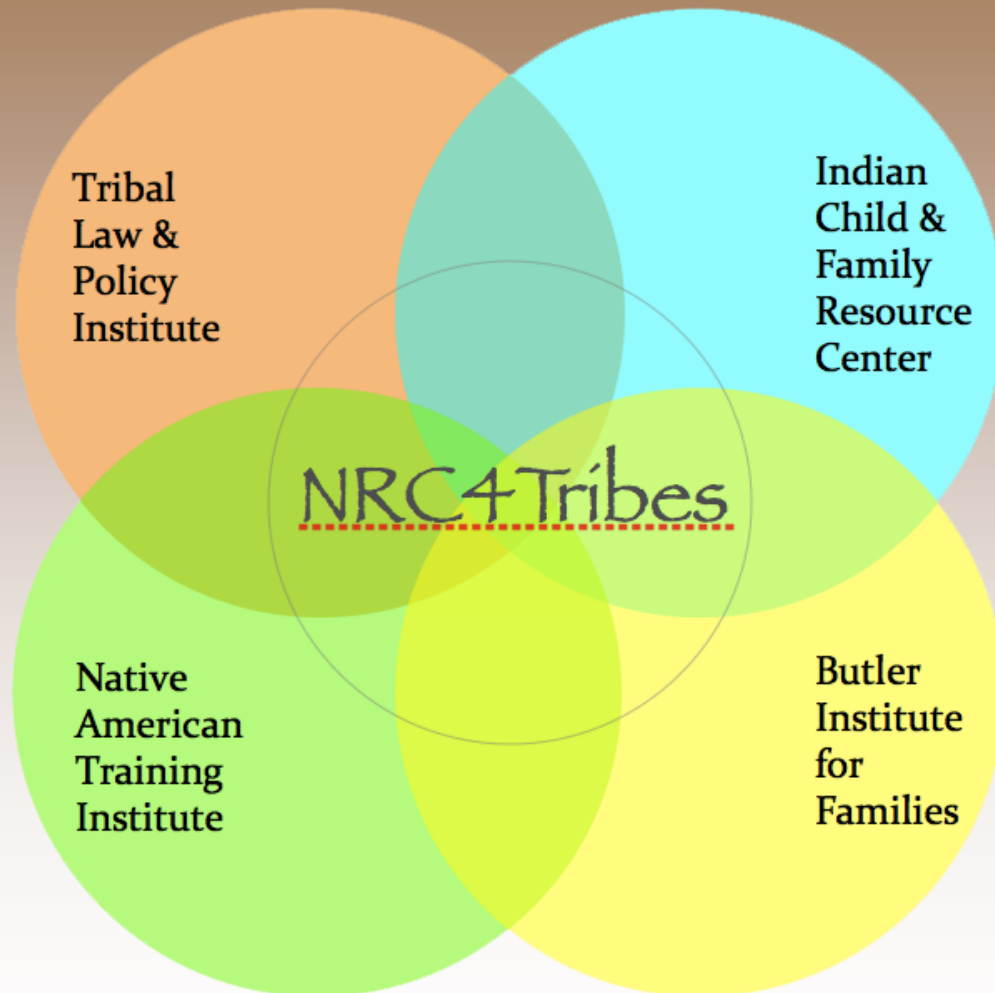
The **National Resource Center for Tribes (NRC4Tribes)** is part of the Children's Bureau Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Network and provides training and technical assistance to support the enhancement of Tribal child welfare systems.

www.NRC4Tribes.org



A Service of the Children's Bureau
A Member of the T/TA Network

The Partnership



National Leadership

A ***National Advisory Council***, comprised of twenty five tribal child welfare professionals, tribal leaders, and community stakeholders from around the country reviews plans and activities of the NRC4Tribes and the larger T/TA Network, provide recommendations regarding the Networks approach to serving Title IV-B funded tribal child welfare systems and improving practices with American Indians and Alaska Native children and families.

The NRC4Tribes role in the T/TA Network

- The NRC4Tribes is not intended to be the *only* source of TA for Tribes.
- Tribes may access training and technical assistance through any of the national resources centers and implementation centers within the Children's Bureau national T/TA Network.
- The NRC4Tribes is the Network's focal point for coordinated and culturally competent child welfare training and technical assistance to Tribes.

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

Reports are downloadable at:

WWW.NRC4Tribes.org

Needs Assessment Purpose

- **Listen** to tribal child welfare program staff, families and community stakeholders talk about program strengths, gaps and challenges.
- **Gather** relevant information, which can then be distilled into an accurate profile of the tribal child welfare system.
- **Inform Decisions** about types of services, administrative functions, data and information collection, program management and reporting.
- **Provide Information** about the training and technical assistance available to tribes.

Needs Assessment Methods

General Online Survey

- 85-items; checklists, multiple choice, open-ended
- 262 surveys completed by representatives of more than 100 tribes

Tribal Director Telephone Interviews

- 31 tribal child welfare directors across 6 Children's Bureau regions (7 BIA regions)

Tribal Stakeholder On-site Interviews

- 20 IV-B funded tribes were invited; 16 accepted
- 149 in-person interviews were conducted

A stratified random sampling process based on geographic region and size was used to select tribes to participate in on-site and telephone interviews.

Needs Assessment Respondents

- 400+ individuals representing 127 federally-recognized tribes
- General Online Survey respondents: 42.8% involved with the tribal child welfare agency
- Interviewees:
 - 45.6% tribal child welfare staff
 - 17.4% foster parents and youth
 - 37% were other stakeholders

Tribal Child Welfare Program Strengths

- Approach to working with families

“I would say just our knowledge of the local people is a strength. That would be a prevention in itself. And being able to find relatives in a timely manner.”

- Characteristics of child welfare staff

“We have a well educated and well trained staff who interact very well with the target population.”



Tribal Child Welfare Program Strengths

- Available tribal services or resources

“We work collaboratively with state agencies and services agencies to ensure appropriate culturally based services.”

- Cultural understanding

“Obviously, child welfare is very important no matter what walk of life you are, but for the Native American folks, it’s about us re-establishing traditions and language and the family togetherness. It’s more about trying to stop genocide, if you will, and I think that’s the greatest strength of all the tribal programs, is what we’re actually trying to accomplish. That is what we fight for every day.”

Tribal Child Welfare Program Challenges

- **Lack of funding for operations and services**

“I think money is a downfall and staffing and resources. Those are all of our bad areas. Foster care payments are hard, and our funds are limited so we can’t offer a lot of things that we want to make this a better program.”

- **Lack of staff**

“You might hear a lot of times, ‘we’ve only got one person.’ You have no idea what that is like, the impact of what that is like. I think it’s a barrier toward a better communication and any child welfare procedure, whether it’s strengthening from the beginning and working on a prevention road or if it’s working with a family that has children in custody. If you don’t have the staff then you’re limited.”

Tribal Child Welfare Program Challenges

- Lack of prevention services
- Technology for data tracking and case management
- Collaborating with state or county child welfare departments

“Well, we try to work with the state but they seem to have their own agenda and it’s hard, it’s really hard to work with them because, I mean for various reasons, but it’s kind of a contentious relationship.”

- Accessing services and working with service providers

“We do live in a very rural area so I think that transportation is a huge barrier for us as far as our families having access to those services.”

Foster Care and Adoption

- The models for providing foster care services varied widely
- Some findings:
 - Collaboration with state and county child welfare departments is key.
 - Belief that children must not be lost to their families, tribes, culture, and traditions.
 - Overall, tribes appeared to be supportive of adoptions by family or other tribal members but generally not supportive of children being adopted into non-Native or in some cases Native homes from other tribes.
 - When occurring in state courts, tribal workers felt they could not always prevent non-Native and non-tribal specific adoptions.
 - Several tribes have implemented *customary adoptions*.
 - However, tribal workers expressed a concern that a customary adoption might not allow adoptive parents to receive adoption subsidies available to adoptive parents who went through state courts.

Foster Care and Adoption

- **38%** indicated the need for T/TA around permanency options for children and families, including adoption, guardianship, and customary/cultural adoption
- **41%** have a critical need for T/TA regarding in-home services such as placement prevention and post-reunification services

Identified T/TA Areas

Increased training and preparation for tribal foster parents

Better assessment of the needs for children being placed in tribal foster homes

More information for foster parents about the background and problems of the foster children being placed in their homes

Notification of foster parents as to the array of tribal and state/county services that are potentially available

Assistance for tribal foster care workers, so they may become more familiar with state/county foster care policies, regulations, and procedures

Ability to inform tribal foster parents more thoroughly of state/county regulations and to assist in helping them determine if they have met these requirements

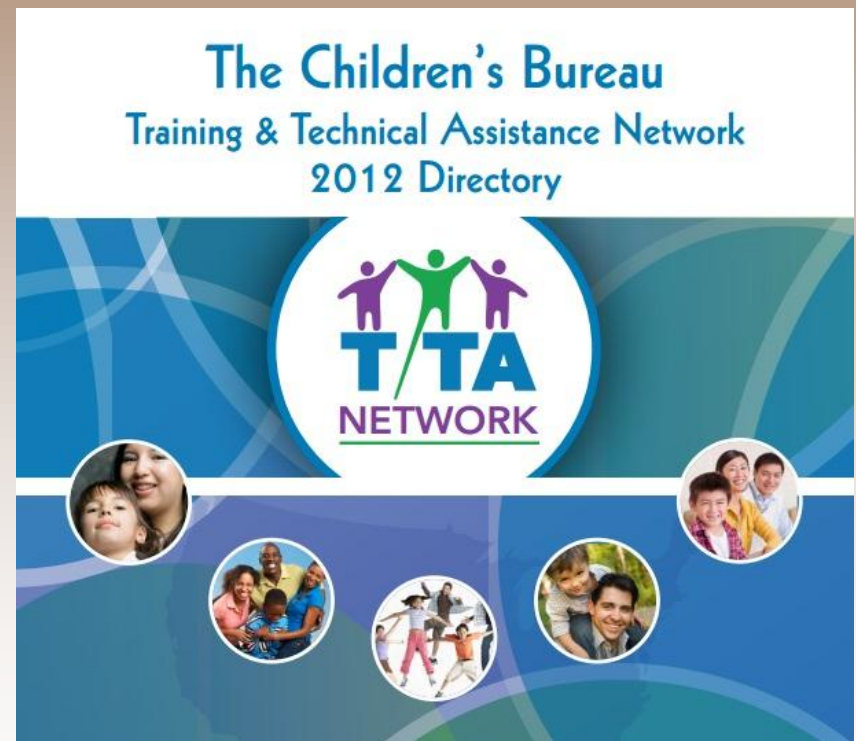
Coordination between tribal and state/county child welfare programs to provide the most comprehensive level of support and services possible to tribal foster parents and foster children

Access to resources for foster parents especially when they are not licensed formally by the state

Accessing T/TA Through the T/TA Network

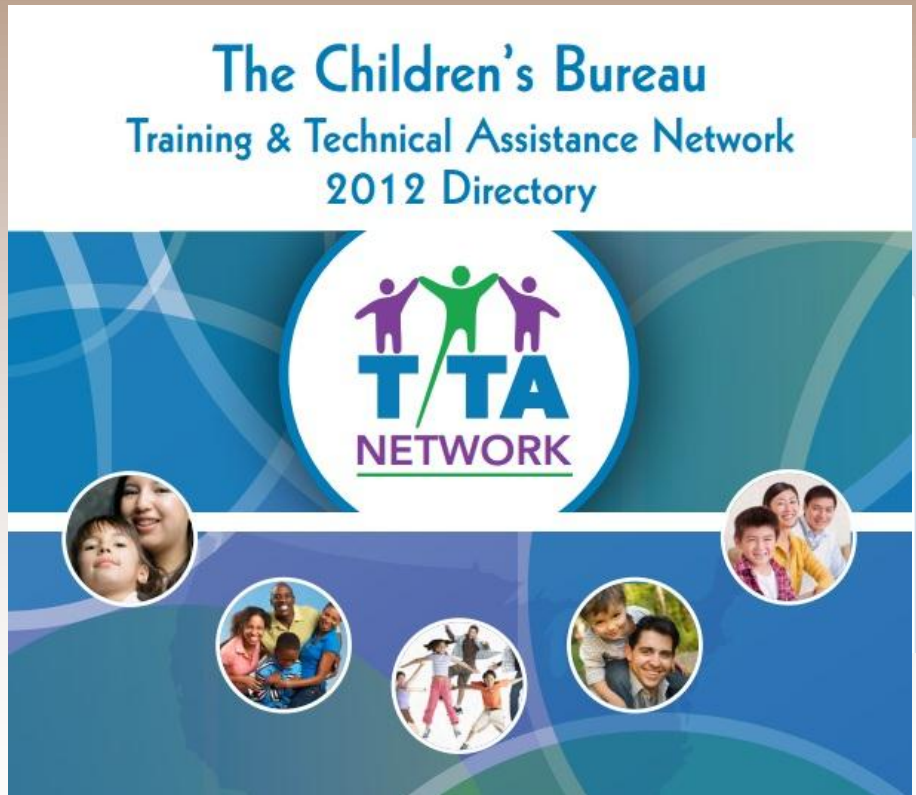
Accessing T/TA

- No wrong door!
- Contact information is available online at:
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/tta/>
- The Directory can also be downloaded at the web address above.



Accessing T/TA

- Call or email **any** of the contact numbers found in the Directory
- Go to www.ttaccportal.org and download the On-site T/TA Network Standard Request Initiation form - **you only have to complete the first 3 pages -**



On-Site T/TA Network Standard Request Initiation Form

On-site T/TA Network Standard Request Initiation

Instructions

This form begins with a State, Tribe, Territory or Court articulating their need for technical assistance. The information collected in this tool is intended to help the Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Network members understand the Technical Assistance (TA) need and determine how best to proceed.

For more information about the T/TA Network, please see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/tta/>.

Certain persons are eligible and authorized to request T/TA in a State, Tribe, Territory, or Court. If the request is from a County, Region (within a State), Court, or other source not directly authorized to make such a request, this form should be submitted to your State's or Tribe's administrative/central child welfare office or Court Improvement Project for approval prior to submission. If you have any questions or need assistance completing this tool, please feel free to contact your ACF Regional Office directly. For more information on your Regional Office, please see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/oro/index.html>.

Part A – Standard Request Initiation Information

Date of Request:		
Organization Requesting Assistance:		
Requestor's Contact Information	Name:	
	Title:	
	Address:	

- Where a Tribe, State, Territory or Court describes their need for technical assistance.
- You can download then complete it or we can walk you through it.

4 Concrete Steps to Take When TA is Needed

1. Understand the need you have
 - Needs assessment or other
2. Contact the T/TA Network
3. Submit a T/TA Network Standard Request Initiation Form
4. Follow-through with process



National Child Welfare Resource Center for Tribes

NRC4Tribes

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The NRC for Diligent Recruitment at AdoptUSKids

An Overview of Training and Technical Assistance

Webinar in conjunction with NRC4Tribes

Sarah Webster ACSW, LMSW-AP
Consultant



What We Do

Provide free on-site and off-site consulting, training, and technical assistance to State, local, Tribal and publicly administered and supported child welfare agencies

Why We Do It

To help child welfare agencies and systems build their capacity to develop and implement effective recruitment and retention services for foster, adoptive, and kinship families.

How We Do It

- By examining your recruitment, response, and retention services
- By helping you make system-wide changes to build capacity to recruit and retain foster, adoptive, and kinship families
- By ensuring your plans are driven by promising practices that will achieve desired outcomes
- Using a cadre of expert staff and consultants
- Note: No system is too big or too small for the NRC to assist

What Does It Mean to Examine?

- Look at the data you have available currently and make suggestions for additional data you may want to track in the future.
- Look at your current recruitment strategies and help you evaluate their effectiveness
- Solicit the input of your stakeholders for their ideas

What Does It Mean To Build Capacity?

- Help you develop a plan that fits you and that you can implement and sustain
- Help you develop a system to evaluate your outcomes to determine any modifications that might need to be made as plans are implemented
- Help you institutionalize your plan in your agency so that it becomes how you do recruitment and retention in the future

Some Ways We Help You Target Your Efforts

- Assist you in developing recruitment plans for specific populations (e.g. teens or sibling groups, etc.) including developing a Diligent Recruitment plan
- Help you engage specific communities in the plan development and implementation (e.g. schools, etc.)
- Apply targeted recruitment strategies such as market segmentation and other data-driven recruitment approaches

Free Recruitment and Retention Resources

- Can be gathered from our website at www.adoptuskids.org/nrc-recruitment
- Help you develop a diverse pool of foster, adoptive, and kinship families
- Enhance your retention efforts through good customer service principles and tools
- Help you navigate making placements across jurisdictions

Examples of Some Resources—All Free

- Quick Tips and Tools for Recruitment and Retention
- Strategies to Retain Foster and Adoptive Families
- Resource Guides and Curricula
- Tips for Good Customer Service

All of these can be tailored to your individual needs

Accessing Other AdoptUSKids Services

- The NRCDR operates within the broader Children's Bureau-funded AdoptUSKids project.
- The NRCDR can assist you in accessing, understanding, and connecting with other professionals within the AdoptUSKids project to learn more about how to utilize all of the free services that AdoptUSKids has to offer.



AdoptUSKids

Together we hold their future

888-200-4005 • WWW.ADOPTUSKIDS.ORG

AdoptUSKids is operated by the Adoption Exchange Association and is made possible by grant number 90CQ0002 from the Children's Bureau. The contents of this presentation are solely the responsibility of the Adoption Exchange Association and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Children's Bureau, ACYF, ACF, or HHS. The Children's Bureau funds AdoptUSKids as part of a network of National Resource Centers established by the Children's Bureau.



Larry Behrens, Adoptions/Foster Care Coordinator

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENT FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

Application & Certification Process (Pre-approval)

Areas of improvement

- Fingerprint process is too long
- Do not receive foster care payment until home study is finished
- Non-tribal homes that have placement of Choctaw kids want to be included in tribal events, newspaper, calendar of events, Choctaw mail outs
- Home Study process is lengthy, would like follow-up calls to ensure they are getting the paperwork completed-reminder
- Wish the home assessment process was faster

Areas that were performed well

- Foster care worker keeps them updated about the child
- Great foster care staff
- Home study process is speedier than DHS
- Foster care staff is encouraging and accessible
- Great communication with the foster care workers
- Helpful foster care staff
- Foster care workers respond back to foster parents in a timely manner
- Foster care worker (Larry) is experienced in fostering/adopting
- Foster care workers are available to answer questions
- Likes Pride classes being 3 days vs. DHS pride classes

APPROVED FOSTER/ADOPTIVE HOME STATUS (Post Approval)

Areas of improvement

- Poor communication between the foster parents and ICW worker
- Sometimes do not know who to contact for questions, who is the worker?
- Very slow with placements
- Would like to have internet training available
- Would like to have more input into what happens to the children in their home
- ICW worker does not check on kids regularly
- Would like to have a history of the foster kids in their home
- Want updates of what's going on with foster children
- Would like ICW workers contact information to get in touch with them
- ICW worker does not return phone calls
- Can't ever get in touch with their ICW worker
- Would like to see Choctaw children represented in court by a Choctaw Nation attorney, rather than court appointed
- Better access to ICW worker

- More staffing on foster care case in regards to reunification
- State and tribal workers on the same page
- Wish ICW worker would push DHS to get things done, influence them a little more
- Wish tribe would take Choctaw kids into their custody
- Would like Choctaw Nation to help expand their home to accommodate more foster children
- Need more tribal workers so they can be involved individually with the child
- Wish Biological family wasn't given so many chances
- More support for transporting kids and parents to visitations
- Availability of counseling for foster parents after reunification to help deal with loss of child in their home
- Would like more honesty from ICW worker, don't sugar coat. Just be honest to the foster parent
- Better bridge activities between foster parents
- Update on their training hours

Areas that are performed well

- Workers help navigate between DHS and Choctaw systems
- Workers have been very supportive
- Shane and Larry are the best!
- Loves that Vicki is accessible and calls her back in a timely manner
- Cultural training is great
- Food is always good at trainings
- Good support from Children and Family Services
- Great programs available to Choctaw children
- Foster care program is great about supplying anything for foster children, furniture, high chairs, clothes, etc
- Clothing Allowances
- Evident appreciation of foster parents
- Foster care support with Q & A
- Communication between parents and Choctaw workers
- Loves knowing if they needed anything all they have to do is call
- Great back up support for foster family
- Choctaw Nation totally supports foster parents

Suggestions that will improve our services

- Choctaw Nation being represented legally in court during child welfare cases
- Need house winterized and some remodeling???
- Post-Adoption services to assist with applications such as amended CDIB's

- Create a program just for adding on to homes to take in more children
- Create paper or packet to give to foster parents with numbers and information on where to get help
- Support Group for post adoption families, kids can meet other adoptive kids

Adopting Foster Care Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

Education:

1979- graduated Luddy High School

1981- graduated Oklahoma State University

1985- 1991 Court Worker Community Services Boys' Center
1985-1991 North Oklahoma City, OK

1985-2010 Director of Juvenile Justice- System Services
Director of Police Recruit

2010-2011- Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma- Adoptive Foster-
Care

Personal Experience:

1990- My son and I became foster parents for the Cherokee Nation. We have been happy to have adopted 14 children
and 10 foster children. We have 12 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Appreciative Inquiry Report, Choctaw Nation Focus Groups Held September 14-15 and October 4-5, 2010

WHAT IF.....

Role for current Choctaw Nation foster parents in recruiting

- What if foster parents are encouraged to recruit other foster parents and their neighbors?
- What if a recruitment bonus or incentive payment is given to foster parents for recruiting new foster parents?

Strategies for targeting likely prospective foster parents

- What if recruitment efforts are targeted to individuals who work with at risk children?
 - Head Start
 - Children's shelter
- What if recruitment efforts are to include outreach from Choctaw Nation Indian Child Welfare (ICW) staff to current foster parents to identify interested parents, Choctaw Nation children identifying caretakers of their choice, and birth parents identifying individuals they would be comfortable with caring for their children?
- What if older tribal members are actively recruited to foster only and/or to provide respite?
- What if recruiting presentations are made to service clubs and churches? What if churches are asked to identify one foster family among their membership that the organization agrees to commit their support to?
- What if a program similar to one church/one child is developed as "One Church/One Town" so that each town has at least one foster home to help keep children in their own community?
- What if a recruitment initiative is created especially for tribal employees?
- What if Choctaw Nation ICW staff contact former foster youth to help with recruitment or to serve as foster parents themselves?
- What if the tribe develops a strategy to increase the number of kinship homes that are willing to become regular licensed foster homes?

Appreciative Inquiry Report (continued)

Strategies for promoting the importance of Choctaw foster homes for Choctaw children

- What if Choctaw Nation prioritizes the value of being a Choctaw Nation foster parent as well as the tribe prioritizes the value of being a member of the Choctaw Nation?
 - The foster parent billboards are an excellent example!
- What if the whole community of the Cherokee Nation continues to cultivate the message of the importance of bringing Choctaw children home and raising them with Choctaw traditions and resources?
- What if website information about foster parenting through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and the Choctaw Nation is clearly explained in the packet and in the newspaper in addition to the website information?
- What if advertisements for Choctaw Foster Parents are placed in the Choctaw Nation Newspaper, *The Biskinik*?
- What if ICW staff continues to promote the importance of Choctaw Foster parents through booths at tribal events, brochures, posters, and billboards?
- What if the Choctaw Nation newspaper, *The Biskinik*, prints occasional stories about the positive experiences of foster parents helping children return to their birth families?
 - Articles on foster parenting written by foster parents, Indian Child Welfare staff (ICW), and former foster children?
- What if Chief Pyle and Assistant Chief Batton speak out on the importance of Choctaw foster parents for Choctaw children on a regular basis in a variety of venues?
 - What if they do this at the end of every written or spoken message to the Choctaw Nation?

Appreciative Inquiry Report (continued)

Strategies for supporting prospective Choctaw foster parents throughout the licensing process

- What if contact cards or memos are developed so that all ICW staff can document calls and pass necessary information to recruiting staff?
 - What if the card/memo includes a standardized message to provide in response to inquiries?
- What if there is ongoing contact with the foster parent from that first phone call, at least every two weeks?
 - What if this task is included formally in the strategic planning process for recruitment and retention?
- What if contact with the licensing worker continues at least monthly until the parents have their first placement?
- What if collaboration with law enforcement agencies yields a more efficient and timely process for completing the finger printing requirement for licensing?
- What if case workers let foster parents know where they are in the certification process and how long it will take?
 - What if the case worker asks if there are any questions?
 - What if the prospective foster parent is asked if they would like to be paired with an experienced foster parent to mentor them?

Appreciative Inquiry Report (continued)

- What if parents applying for foster care licenses are given a check list with anticipated time lines to help track their progress so that they know when something is due? What if foster parent applicants are encouraged to call to check on their status?
- What if the Choctaw Nation newspaper, *The Biskinik*, prints an article about the kinds of legal history issues that would disqualify individuals from foster parenting and the types that would not? What if that information is reprinted once or twice a year?
- What if ICW continues to break the application down into shorter steps with more one on one contact?
- What if PRIDE training is held on 2 long weekends, or a long three day weekend, rather than 10 weekly sessions?
- What if exit interviews are conducted with individuals who did not complete the licensing process to learn more about the reasons they did not complete the process?
 - What if a college intern is tagged to complete this task?

Appreciative Inquiry Report (continued)

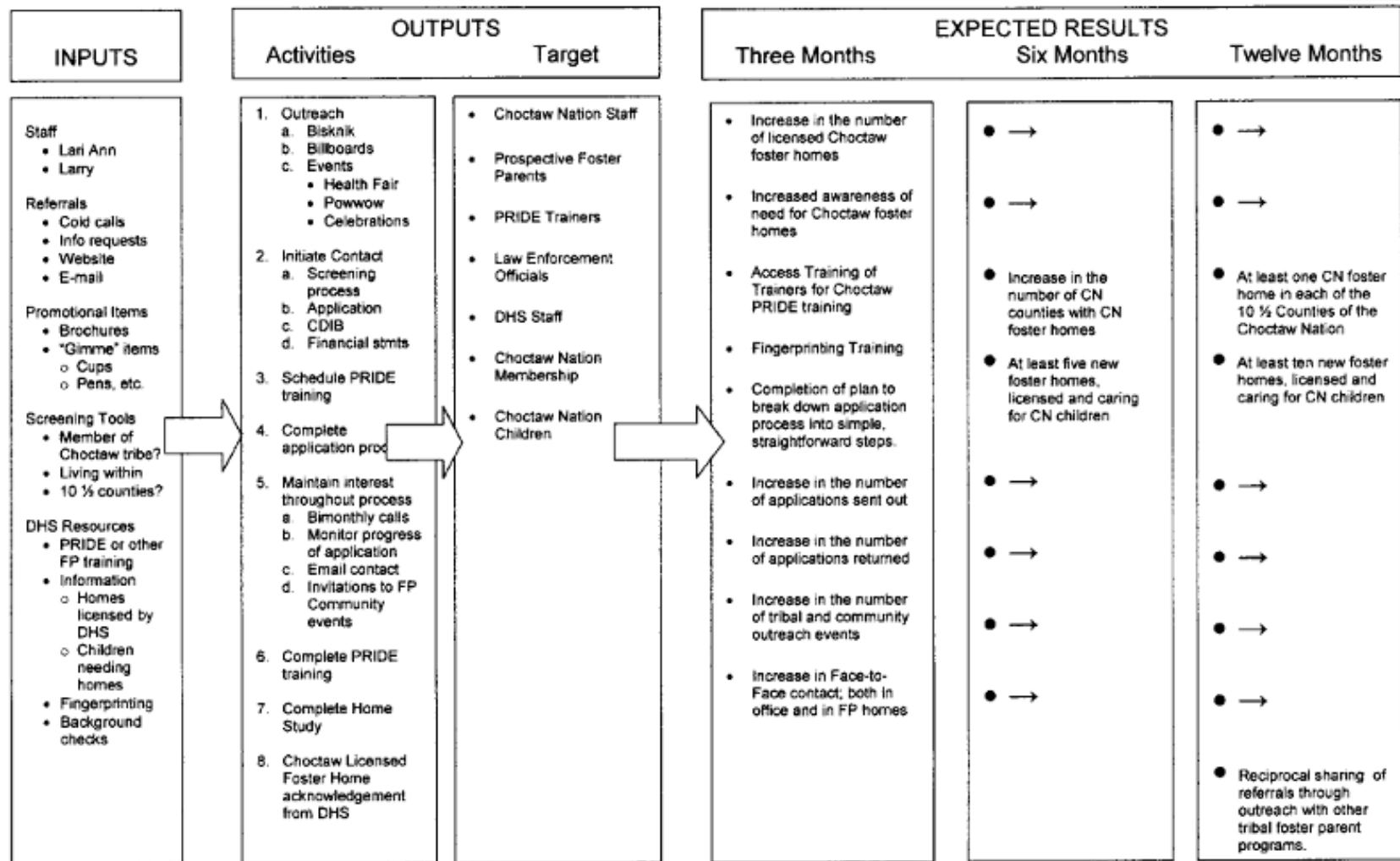
Strategies to address the unique challenges experienced by Choctaw Nation Foster parents

- What if Choctaw Nation Indian ICW tells the foster parents they are giving them all of the information about the child that is available at the time of placement?
 - What if foster parents are informed that they will receive more information as it becomes available? What if the Choctaw Nation ICW staff strives to keep that commitment?
 - What if they are given this information in writing?
- What if extended family members such as grandparents and others are included in the licensing process to provide more flexibility for respite services in rural communities?
- What if foster parents are provided with a log or journal to keep track of all the information they receive about the child?
 - Birth certificate, medical card
 - Educational records
 - Medical records
 - Case plans
 - Information from case workers and others working with the child
 - Information about tribal resources available to foster parents and foster children
- What if Choctaw Nation Indian Child Welfare develops a plan for supporting communication after the child goes home, depending on the individual needs of the child?
 - What if a former foster parent can call the case worker or birth family and ask how the child is doing if the family is comfortable with continued contact?
 - What if Choctaw Nation ICW lets foster and birth parents know that continued contact is all right if they want it?
 - What if Choctaw Nation ICW lets foster and birth parents know that continued contact is often beneficial for the child/ren?

Appreciative Inquiry Report (continued)

- Billboards on the Indian Nations Turnpike
- Notices in the tribal newspaper, the *Bisknik*
- A booth at a tribal health fair

Choctaw Nation Foster Parent Recruitment Model



Assumption: Choctaw Nation children and their families will benefit from stronger cultural and community connections provided by Choctaw foster families

Questions?

