



State-Tribal Relations Committee

64th Montana Legislature

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June 14, 2016

To: STRC Members

Fr: Hope Stockwell, Research Analyst

Re: Protect Montana Kids Commission Report recommendations related to ICWA

In September 2015, Governor Bullock created the Protect Montana Kids Commission and asked it to provide him with an evidence-based, comprehensive set of recommendations to align the Montana child protection system with national standards and best practices in the field of child welfare.

The Commission issued its report on May 31, 2016, making recommendations for more than a dozen statutory changes, for structural changes and enhancements at the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD), for increased transparency in the Child Protection System, and for additional resources in various agencies, including CFSD, county attorneys' offices, the Office of the Public Defender, the Attorney General's office, and the judicial branch.

Included in the recommendations for structural changes and enhancements at the CFSD are the following specific to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):

- Explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration with other public and private agencies and organizations for services such as home studies, licensing, and training for foster and adoptive families; implementation of best practices/promising practice tools such as a telehealth platform for field staff training, support, and case review; and stronger relationships with private providers, the tribes, reservations, and urban Indians in Montana.
- Integrate Child and Family Services and Tribal Nations: a) ensure compliance with ICWA, with emphasis on permanency and collective responsibility and integration of ICWA and CFSD; b) prioritize ICWA review, compliance, and training; and c) explore opportunities for collaboration and partnership to serve Indian children and families with tribal governments.

The Commission's full report is available on our web page for this meeting. Please let me know if you would like a copy.