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ND awarded grant to improve child support case management and collections over state lines and tribal borders

State partnering with Three Affiliated Tribes in effort to improve case management and increase collections

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Child Support Division, along with the Three Affiliated Tribes' Division of Child Support Enforcement, received a \$500,000 federal grant to improve intergovernmental child support case management and collections.

"North Dakota's child support program is already one of the highest-performing programs in the country. This project will lead to even more program improvements through an innovative and unique partnership with the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara (MHA) Nation," Gov. Doug Burgum said. "We're deeply grateful for this opportunity to work alongside our tribal partners to improve the lives of children and families, and for the federal funding to support this effort."

"With this grant, child support services on the MHA Nation can be strengthened," said Chairman Mark Fox. "This would mark a great improvement in the system, as our Native American children would benefit from being able to receive the support they need, should a parent live on or off the reservation."

A six-person state and tribal project team, along with a private consultant, will begin a multi-phase effort to strengthen how the state processes both incoming and outgoing intergovernmental child support cases to maximize collections for children and families. Intergovernmental child support cases require coordination between North Dakota and another state, tribe or country because a child's parents live in different jurisdictions.

Department records show that approximately one out of four North Dakota child support cases involves another state, tribe or country. The collection rate in cases where assistance is requested from another jurisdiction is about 48.5 percent. In comparison, the collection rate in cases where the assistance of another jurisdiction is not required is 78.4 percent, which is above the national average of 65.85 percent.

"North Dakota has a very high collection rate for current support when both parents live in North Dakota, but the collection rate is much lower in cases that involve a second jurisdiction," said Jim Fleming, the state's Child Support Division director. "We are really excited about this opportunity to examine how we do business in intergovernmental cases and then implement permanent changes to our program that will positively impact North Dakota children."

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One aspect of the project includes a detailed analysis of case referral and transfer processes between the state and the Three Affiliated Tribes' Division of Child Support Enforcement to determine if there is a better way to coordinate casework between the two offices. The project will serve all families who are receiving child support services from North Dakota and/or the Three Affiliated Tribes and have at least one parent in the family who lives in another jurisdiction.

"We serve children best by trying innovative strategies and working as one across different jurisdictions," said Scott Davis, Indian Affairs Commission executive director. "This is a significant partnership and the first time that a child support grant of this type has been awarded jointly to a state and tribal program."

North Dakota was one of nine child support agencies awarded the grant funding from the Office of Child Support Enforcement within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families.

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