

## **Topic 6 – Child Welfare System and Early Childhood Development**

*Examples of success in supporting child development among children in the child welfare system.*

- Leech Lake Reservation has a child development person on their child welfare advisory commission who oversees licensing foster care homes. This inter-agency group is appointed by the tribal council to review child protection cases. It includes tribal members from the community and tribal agencies.
- Support excellent foster care parents who advocate for children in their care and getting their needs met.
- Provide child-centered case management and service coordination.
- Develop an infant-toddler credential.
- Prioritize foster care and kinship families with children for Head Start slots and other services.
- Develop online training modules for foster parents.

*Barriers to supporting health development among young children in the child welfare system.*

- Urban American Indian population – no support for foster parents to put foster children in high-quality programs.
- Case managers have high caseloads, 50 on the reservation and maybe 20 in the counties.
- Case management is sometimes very fragmented.
- Turnover from elections on reservations harms services available for children.
- Only 6 or 7 tribes access Title IV-E (federal foster care funding) directly.
- Engaging tribal leaders can be difficult, they have many competing priorities.
- Capacity and quality issues for special needs children is missing.
- Tribal agencies are small and turnover happens all of the time.
- Some states will not pay for relative care and don't provide medical subsidies.
- Group homes are always full and relatives are not signing up to be foster parents.
- Documentation doesn't always follow the child.

*How communities can address those barriers.*

- Disseminate more information on brain development science in the community, and provide training on brain science, ACEs, and trauma to frontline caseworkers.
- Provide training on child development and brain science for parents.
- Federal government: Title IV-E and Title IV-B (child welfare services and promoting safe and stable families) funding should require that high-quality early childhood and development is a priority for foster children, especially those under age 3.
- States should not be allowed to cancel Medical Assistance, Title IV-E, or access for children in foster care.

- Advocate for modifications in Title IV-E for tribes.
- Develop parent coaches.
- Develop better educational material to help tribes understand what funds are out there and how they can access it.
- We need a business plan for every child.
- Engage philanthropy.
- Have parent cafes about child development.
- Develop multi-disciplinary child and family teams.
- Develop a cross-agency business plan for the benefit of children.