

Child Support Program Open for Business

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The Northern Arapaho Child Support Program (NACSP) (now fully operational) is currently accepting applications for services from anyone living on the Wind River Indian Reservation, including the city of Riverton.

The NACSP was first initiated two years ago to help address the child support issues on the reservation. Since then the program administrator, Lee Spoonhunter, has been developing the guidelines for the program so that it will be in compliance with state regulations and that it will also meet the cultural needs of the tribe. With the program up and going, anyone on the reservation with child support issues can find assistance with NACSP. The NACSP is located in the Northern Arapaho Nation Department of Social Services in Arapaho, WY. The NACSP currently has a staff of 17 employees including an in-house attorney and a judge. The attorney and judge are supervised by Tribal Court Chief Judge John St. Clair.

The NACSP will be taking 2,252 child support cases over from the state. Anyone living on the reservation, tribal and non-tribal, can apply for NACSP services. The NACSP will begin the process by first establishing paternity through voluntary acknowledgement or court order aided by genetic testing. Once paternity has been established the child or children will have the right to financial support from both parents and benefits through their father such as social security, veterans and other insurances as well as inheritance and possible tribal membership status.

New orders for child support can also be established for families where one or both parents are absent from the home due to separation, divorce, or substitute care placement of a child. Existing child support orders can also be modified when there is a substantial change in circumstances such as a change in income or a change in the child or children's living arrangements.

Since the NACSP has their own in-house attorney and judge, the NACSP will have child support hearings at the NANDSS building.

The NACSP staff will monitor all child support cases on a regular basis to make sure the non-custodial parent is compliant with their order. The orders are enforced to make sure that child is receiving support. The types of enforcement include income withholding, interception of state and federal taxes, gaming winnings, suspension of tribal fishing and hunting licenses for tribal members, and jail. Although the NACPS is not a collection agency, they will do all they can to enforce the court orders of child support. First and foremost is the well-being of the child(ren) and ensuring that they are receiving adequate care and support. The NACSP will also work with local agencies should the non-custodial parent move away from the reservation. Should the non-custodial parent attempt to ignore the court order because he or she no longer lives on the reservation he/she will find that the NACSP will be working with local agencies to enforce the court order to ensure that the non-custodial parent is in compliance or will face further legal action.

The NACSP takes the emotional and physical well-being of the child(ren) into consideration and will do all they can to reach out the heart and spirits of the children to enable personal growth and fulfillment for these children. NACSP believes that support for children is more than just money. Despite financial limitations, many tribal families are successful in other ways. Because of this belief, the NACSP help families strengthen their ties with their children. Just because the parents may no longer be together does not mean they can still be involved in the children's lives. The NACSP will encourage two parent involvement as well as non-cash and emotional contributions to the children.

Children are the most precious resource any community can have and they must be protected and cared for. It is the children that will carry on our legacies in this rapidly changing world. The NACSP believes this and will do all they can to ensure that the children will have all the financial and emotional support available to them.