

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Public Health & Human Services

Title IV-B
Annual Progress and Service Report

Submitted by:

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Introduction

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) Public Health and Human Services is the designated Tribal Agency with authority to prepare and submit the Annual Progress and Service Report. The Agency is responsible for the administration and supervision of the Child Welfare Service program within the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

On October 1, 2015 with the approval of the Administration of Children and Families of the Title IV-E State Plan, EBCI initiated their unique child welfare system as part of the Integrated Child Welfare Model that includes behavioral health specialists and mental health support. Children and their families who come to the attention of the Family Safety Program as a result of an allegation of child maltreatment receives prompt attention to the needs of the child. The development of this program has taken into account all the barriers and challenges experienced over the years from working with five counties on the Qualla Boundary as well as the native children and their families who may live in the surrounding area. The opportunity of completing investigations and assessments, providing in-home services and foster care services, and eventually adoption services are a huge transition from the level of services previously provided through the receipt of Title IV-B, subpart 1 and 2 funding.

The continuum of services required upon becoming a Title IV-E agency is inclusive of not just foster care and adoption services, but also preplacement services that clearly address ways in which prevention of removal from the home is available, reunification services to ensure that adequate and appropriate services are provided to rapidly return the child to the home of the parents, and other permanency services are provided on behalf of children cannot return to the parents, which may include: adoption, legal guardianship or other permanent placement options.

The mission of EBCI Public Health and Human Services is: HONORING, our Cherokee community by PROVIDING excellent care, safe health and SERVING families in a culturally respectful way.

The vision of EBCI Public Health and Human Services is: Seven generations of wellness with families strong in mind, body and spirit.

Plan Availability:

The five - year Child and Family Services Plan and the Annual Progress and Services Report are available at the Public Health and Human Services website at <http://www.cherokee-hmd.com/family-families>

[ty/index.html](http://www.cherokee-hmd.com/family-families). All services and interventions within the continuum of Family Safety are intended to enhance and ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of children in their own homes, homes of kin or within a home of an EBCI Tribe member. All services provided are reflected from the lens of the EBCI cultural heritage. EBCI will provide a copy of the plan to the director of NC DHHS via email and mail.

1. Update on CFSP Goals & Accomplishments:

The accomplishments throughout the year per the CFSP 2014 – 2019 are outlined below. However, due to the entire redesign of the family support and child welfare program beginning in October 2015, the existing CFSP approved by the ACF Regional Office will be revised in 2019 to highlight and identify the system revisions and the incorporation of the Integrated Child Welfare Model. As EBCI continues to provide optimum care for the children and families living on the Qualla Boundary, additional revisions and updates to the system of care may be needed and will be communicated in subsequent amendments to this plan as needed.

The information below reflects the integration of accomplishments made toward the existing goals and objectives outlined in the Child and Family Services Plan, as well as the many endeavors pursued as a result of running a tribal child welfare system.

Existing goals and objectives remain the same as the of date of this APSR.

Goal 1: In-home casework services will be provided to 37 Cherokee families who are at risk of having children removed from their home. In-home services will help to ensure the continued safety of the child and increase family stability while working to eliminate problematic areas. In-home services include home maker services, home safety assessments, client transportation, and referrals as appropriate.

- Objective 1: Administer the North Carolina risk assessment tool.
- Objective 2: Assist family in developing goals to guide forward progress.
- Objective 3: Assist family in identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Objective 4: Assist families in developing strategies for achieving goals.

Update: With the onset of Tribal responsibility on October 1, 2015 focus on these objectives were incorporated into the system of care. Family Safety currently utilizes the Signs of Safety framework to identify needs, strengths and develop goals and strategies in partnership with the family to address safety concerns. These strategies help to keep children safely with their families in their homes. The Family Safety Program provides in-home services via both its Investigative unit and the Family Integrity Preservation (FIP) unit. The Family Safety Program has received 2,370 reports of maltreatment since October 1, 2015, these reports involved 4,118 children, and 80% of these reports were screened in for investigation. The FIP and Investigative units have provided in-home supports to 500 families since October 1, 2015.

Goal 2: Time-limited reunification services will be provided to 15 Cherokee families to expedite the reunification of families and securing permanency for children in the least amount of time possible. This goal will remain unchanged as these services to families are dependent upon referrals from DSS.

- Objective 1: Assist families in completing court-ordered case plans whose children are in foster care or kinship placement.
- Objective 2: Attend court hearings to better serve families.
- Objective 3: Tribal social worker will visit child in home at least monthly and as possible before each court hearing.

Update: Historically efforts to reunify native children with their parents, or relatives has been ongoing and supported with Title IV-B funding. With the onset of the Family Safety Program there has been extensive efforts made to keep family together and to expedite reunification whenever possible through the provision of services and goods. As part of this goal, the Family Safety workers have developed case plans for each family identifying tasks needed to ensure that children may be returned to their parents, or that children remain safely with relatives. All staff are trained on utilizing Signs of Safety tools when working with families to ensure the most person centered strength based approach with all families. The Tribal Code sets out specific timelines to achieve permanency for children in custody and sets a priority to reunify children with their parents or a member of their family.

Goal 3: Assist County DSS in a joint Foster Care Initiative by recruiting Cherokee families to serve as foster homes to Cherokee children. We would project at least 6 Cherokee families being recruited and licensed the first year of this new plan cycle. But maintain those foster homes and increase by 1 per year thereafter. Optimistic increase since the Tribe is scheduled to assume CPS and foster responsibility from the State by October 1, 2015.

Objective 1: Assist County DSS in the recruitment of potential Cherokee foster homes.

Objective 2: Assist County in providing pre-foster care training.

Objective 3: Research the possibility of the Tribe becoming licensed by the State as a Child Placing Agency.

Update: Since October 1, 2015, Family Safety is recruiting, training and licensing their own resource families within EBCI. Prior to the formation of the child welfare agency, there were 3 licensed foster homes. To date, the EBCI has licensed 38 foster homes. Efforts have increased to ensure that Cherokee children remain in their Cherokee community with extended family while nuclear family issues are being resolved within the time limit mandated by Tribal Law. Family Safety's recruitment, training and licensing continue onward. Family Safety offers MAPPS-TIPS training to all families seeking licensure by hosting 8-10 weeks of classes for those interested in becoming fully licensed. The program also completes home assessments, fingerprint based background checks, fire inspections, and reference checks for all foster home applicants. The Family Safety Program has set a goal to develop therapeutic foster care and independent living in Cherokee over the next two years. The Family Safety Program will also be working to develop a kinship navigator program.

Goal 4: Provide Parenting Education classes for at least 45 Cherokee families. Providing classes that will give parents the tools needed to raise children in a safe and nurturing environment, ensuring that children will grow to become responsible adults and valuable assets to the Cherokee community.

Objective 1: Provide parenting education classes 4 times per year or on an individual basis as requested.

Objective 2: Provide child care and transportation to participate as needed.

Objective 3: Research and purchase a parenting curriculum specific to Native American populations.

Update: The Family Safety Program is updating the parenting education curriculum to better meet the needs of families participating. The program has been implementing Love and Logic and some aspects of the program work well for our population while others do not. The program is looking to implement aspects of Positive Indian Parenting and the Positive Parenting Program. An average of five families per month participated in parenting education classes with 20 classes per month being facilitated by staff. In addition, the Family Safety staff facilitate an average of 70 supervised visits each month. Families visit frequently and the staff supervising the visits also take the opportunity to implement parenting skill training to help parents better interact with their children.

Goal 5: Staff will receive 20 hours of training appropriate for their field of expertise

Objective 1: Staff will be up to date on innovative ideas of best practice relating to case management, family preservation, childhood trauma and other significant training.

Update: A comprehensive training plan (attached) has been established and additional training has begun for staff. During the last year, staff have completed over 100 hours of in person training and 34 hours of online training. During the last year Family Safety has completed training in human trafficking, Signs of Safety, ICWA, hoarding, implicit bias, motivational interviewing, shared parenting, separation and loss, termination of parental rights, trauma informed care, family centered practice, and child and family teams. By October 2018 the program will have additional training in child abuse and neglect, Signs of Safety, documentation, resiliency, results based accountability, and IV-E.

The EBCI has a fully functioning regulatory and compliance department within PHHS. This division acts as the licensing authority for foster homes; contains two compliance officers who evaluate PHHS, including Family Safety, on a regular basis; receives and responds to complaints; responds to appeals; and also develops quality improvement projects for the programs within PHHS. This department conducts regular file reviews for Family Safety and provides guidance for improving the program.

1. **Service Descriptions**

Investigative assessment:

Current: EBCI started providing investigative assessment October 1, 2015. This service includes assessment of child safety and family needs on calls received by intake social workers, which includes a home visit, safety planning with the family, referrals for needed services and implementing interventions to stabilize the family home. Family Safety utilizes the Signs of Safety practice model to work with families throughout the Family Safety continuum of services.

Plan for FY 19: The investigative assessment unit will continue to be implemented in the manner noted above. EBCI will continue to build upon successes in this area through continuing to train and coach staff through supervision and experiential and classroom training. PHHS will ensure social workers understand the issues of child safety, such as the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, behavioral health issue within families, domestic violence, among others. The investigative unit is working closely with the EBCI Child Advocacy Center, Heart to Heart, to create a partnership that provides even more comprehensive care for children who are victims of abuse. Additionally, the investigative unit is working with Analenisgi behavioral health to develop a way to integrate behavioral health workers at the beginning of cases to prevent removal of children and address concerns early.

Family Integrity Services:

Current: Implementation of this service began in October 1, 2015. Social Workers provide services in the home to address needs of at risk children and families in an effort to strengthen and stabilize the family home, many time assisting in keeping children out of foster care. Services include: providing client transportation, home safety inspection, home maker services and referrals for services to address identified needs.

Plan for FY19: This service is evolving and continues to be a needed service for the families of the Eastern Cherokee. Families seem to plan, prepare and respond to their situations quicker when services are brought into the home. Implementation of many of the same topic areas that are outlined above in the investigative assessment section are also critical in Family Integrity to ensure children are kept safely in their own homes. In FY18, this unit served over 200 families. This unit sees a steady caseload of 40-50 children that are at risk of removal.

Time-Limited Family Reunification Services:

Current: When safety cannot be remediated while the children are still in the home with their family, children are removed and placed in foster care. Family Reunification Services, assists families in addressing safety and risk issues, in order to return the child safely as soon as possible. All possible kin are explored as placement options before children are placed in a foster home. Family reunification services include: developing a court ordered case plan in partnership with the family to address safety issues, visitation between the child and parents, visiting the child where they are living, working with the parents to refer them to services and evaluating progress on services. This unit is integrated with behavioral health services from Analenisgi. Children taken into custody receive a comprehensive clinical assessment within 5 days of petition, children are provided individual therapy, family therapy is offered to the family unit, child parent psychotherapy is provided to children ages 0-3, and all families with children in custody have access to recovery services. In addition, social workers report to and make recommendations to the Court, to ensure that reunification occurs, as soon as it is safe for children to return to their homes. All of these services help to decrease the time children are in foster care and out of their own homes.

Plan for FY19: This unit is now known as the Integrated Child Welfare Team (ICWT). The purpose and services provided by this unit remain the same. Over the next year this unit will continue to develop depth of practice through enhanced Signs of Safety training and utilization of the tools. In addition, ICWT staff require the training outlined above, as well as training around court testimony, court report writing and evidence based practices that can help to meet safety, permanency and wellbeing for Tribal children. The Family Safety Program and the behavioral health unit from Analenisgi will be adding three therapists and two case managers to the team before the end of FY18. This unit also recently added an adult therapist to the team to help complete assessments of parents in a more timely and thorough manner.

Adoption:

Current: When reunifying with their family is not an option for children, due to safety issues, EBCI staff pursue identifying a family within EBCI, either related or unrelated to the child that will allow the child a safe, permanent home. This is one of the most important resources of EBCI Family Safety, since the Tribe, PHHS and the Cherokee Courts have a special interest in all adoptions involving children who are members or descendants of members. The primary purpose of adoption is to help children who would not otherwise have a nurturing family of life long relationships to become a permanent member of a family that can give them the long term and legally grounded care, protection and opportunities essential to personal growth and development. The social worker provides supports and services that allows the best match to be made and makes recommendations to the Court related to a permanent plan of adoption.

The program did not spend up to 20% on adoptions as this is not the ultimate outcome for our cases. From a cultural perspective the EBCI does not strive to terminate or suspend parental rights. We strive to create a healthy, safe, intact Cherokee family that will still include the parents and not sever an important tie for the children.

Plan for FY19: This service will continue to evolve as children begin to have plans of adoption within the Family Safety system. In addition to the training listed above, adoption social workers will require additional training related to legal documentation specific to adoption assistance and other adoption issues. The program does not anticipate a major increase in spending on adoption for the reasons noted above. The program anticipates one adoption completed before the end of the calendar year in 2018 and there is a possibility of three more adoptions during FY19.

Foster Home Recruitment:

In past years, PHHS has delivered all foster home recruitment and training services independently. At the time of this submission the program has 38 licensed homes and currently has 10 more families in training to become fully licensed. PHHS staff recruit, train, and license their own resource families within the Tribe to help take care of children when they must be removed from their homes. This program will continue to evolve as PHHS

continues working towards their implementation vision, outlined specifically in the Family Safety Manual, Section 7000.

Staff Training:

Current: New staff members will receive required training and EBCI is providing a continuum of training (as noted in the Title IV-B State Plan Attachment A) that is offered to all staff as well as community members. All social work staff annually attends workshops specific to their field of work and client population. Workshops such as family preservation, signs of abuse, ADHD, Trauma and children, domestic violence are among approved training topics.

Plan for FY 19: The training plan submitted last year remains the same. So far, the program has completed training in Signs of Safety, policy and procedures, methamphetamine and opioid use, ethics, domestic violence, and professional writing. Staff have upcoming training on documenting child abuse and Signs of Safety skills training. The program has added more days of training related to Signs of Safety and will also be doing a training on proper ways to document bruising and marks.

Integrated Child Welfare Model:

Current: PHHS has a continuum of services that address the complex needs of families served within Family Safety, that are designed to individually address what the family needs. All services are oriented toward the reduction of safety concerns and improvement of parenting/protective capacities and utilize the Signs of Safety model approach and tools. The integrated care model also includes the System of Care framework that assists in coordinating services for children to better meet safety, permanence and well-being needs. Within integrated care, are several components. Behavioral health services include: comprehensive clinical assessment, therapy – both individual and family, parenting educational curriculum (see specifics below) case management, intensive in-home services and drug & alcohol services, among others. Additional services include: family support networks, health services for children and families, concrete goods such as TANF payments to families, housing and job education and training.

Plan for FY19: Continue to implement evidence based models that alleviate risk and safety issue for children, address both parent and child behavioral health and health needs and improve the wellbeing of children and families.

Current: Parenting Education Classes - Classes are provided weekly and are suited to the individual needs of the families. Currently, PHHS uses evidence based Nurturing Parenting curriculum, Alcohol, Anger and Abuse, Love & Logic and the Strengthening Families model, independently or in conjunction with each other, based on the needs of the families being served.

Plan for FY19: These classes are being updated to include more information related to Positive Indian Parenting and Triple P. Many Cherokee families attend parenting education classes and although most are court ordered, some attend voluntarily. Family Safety is

partnering with Analenisgi to expand the availability of voluntary parenting classes in the hopes of preventing the need for Family Safety intervention.

2. Reduction of Length of Time in Care for Children Under Age 5:

Many of the evidence based intervention listed above will help to address the needs of children under age five and those with developmental needs that are in foster care. Specifically, Triple P, Positive Indian Parenting, Love & Logic models, as well as targeted behavioral health services that aim to address safety issues through specific, individualize interventions with families.

Populations of greatest risk: At this time there are no updates since the writing of the CFSP other than the aforementioned.

3. Collaboration

Update: EBCI, NCDSS, and county DSS continue to communicate on a regular basis and when issues arise. There are no longer regular meetings as the group agreed that they were not necessary at this time. NCDSS and DSS are invited to joint planning and receive updates when anything changes for the EBCI. EBCI is also invited to joint planning with the state and receives updates from the state of changes that may impact our common population.

Tribe's demonstration of substantial, ongoing and meaningful collaboration:

EBCI has been able to bring in key partners and stakeholders to date to ensure that the Tribe's most vulnerable children and families receive the services that are needed to support and sustain their family. The EBCI and the five county DSS Directors previously met on a bi-monthly basis. In addition to this meeting the EBCI also had meetings with NC DHHS on a bi-monthly and as needed basis to address issues or concerns as they arise. The group decided that these meetings were no longer necessary as communication has been going well and issues of concern had been addressed.

In addition to this collaboration, EBCI also works to have open communication with the five local DSS Directors and the NC DHHS. The Attorney General's Office of the EBCI also maintains a relationship with the NC Office of Attorney General to help work through any legal issues that may arise. The EBCI also actively participates in the CFSS reviews as they occur in the state of NC.

The Revised Five Year Plan covering Federal Fiscal Year 2017 through 2019, will address planned and ongoing collaboration across multiple partners and entities providing services to Cherokee children and families.

4. Program Support:

PHHS has completed a comprehensive training plan to address requirements of specific federal programming and funding, as well as to address needs specific to EBCI. Trainings are being held and continually developed and scheduled for staff through a variety of

methods. Trainings are being facilitated by both EBCI members and outside contractors. In addition, there are plans to ensure the community understands what Family Safety is utilizing in its work with families.

Quality assurance comes from the PHHS Regulatory & Compliance (R&C) Department. R&C provides oversight for the program as a whole via file reviews and complaint management. R&C also serves as the licensing authority for foster homes approving, denying, and revoking licenses as needed. R&C also oversees all appeals of program decisions.

Phase one of a new case management software went into operation in FY18. Phase two is currently being built, with anticipated completion by October 2018. In referencing the IVB programs there are no known programmatic changes that have been identified at this time.

The Tribe would anticipate requesting TA and capacity building in FY19, as the Tribe continues to build the full continuum of Public Health and Human Services. Capacity building would assist the Tribe in identifying and understanding any obstacles that hinders us from achieving all that we have set out to do in our new social services program, in addition to increasing our abilities to achieve measurable results.

5. Consultation between the States and Tribes:

ICWA: During FY17 the Tribe met with the state court improvement program representatives to discuss ideas for ways to improve ICWA notification. In addition, the EBCI was invited to speak at the fall DSS attorney gathering and will be speaking at the GAL gathering in September 2017. In FY18, Family Safety ICWA workers have attended training presented by NICWA and the EBCI presented at the NICWA conference on the creation of the Family Safety Program. Family Safety also presented at this years National Child Support Association Conference highlighting the collaboration the program has with child support programs. The State as well as the District Court in the 30th Judicial District is well versed in the ICWA. The Tribe and State (via County DSS) have had on occasion compliance disagreements. However, those rare occasions typically are worked out by the Tribe and County. If, however, a resolve could not be met, the tribe would have no issue in calling the State DHHS by way of addressing any concern.

Child Welfare Services/CPS: At this time, EBCI has assumed jurisdiction of all service delivery related to the provision of child protective services and foster care to Tribal children. EBCI has a fully developed Policy and Procedure Manual that sets out the process from intake to permanency of working a case and also addresses the need to work with County providers.

Pub. L. 113-183: The EBCI is aware of the amendments made to Pub L. 113-183 as it relates to case review systems. In selecting the new case review system the EBCI made contact and consulted with ACF to ensure compliance. The EBCI demonstrates its awareness of the amendment to Pub. L. 113-913 via Section 5005 of the PHHS Family

Safety Manual (policy attached), which outlines the requirements of the Department when the most appropriate permanency plan for a child is placement in APPLA.

CFCIP: The EBCI participates in consultation calls with DHHS and county directors as needed. The EBCI and DHHS have a strong working relationship and can address any issues as they arise.

6. Plan for diligent recruitment of potential foster & adoptive parents:

As outlined in Section 7000 of the PHHS Family Safety Manual (policy attached), Family Safety is currently recruiting, training and supporting family resource parents who serve as foster parents when children must be removed from their own homes.

Family Safety actively recruits by attending community club meetings, hosting foster care recruitment meetings, and advertising via Tribal e-mail, local television, and billboards.

During the first two years of operation children who came into custody of the Family Safety Program have been overwhelmingly enrolled members of the EBCI or first descendants of enrolled members of the EBCI. The Family Safety Program recruits any all individuals within our service area who would like to foster and/or adopt to ensure that we have a wide variety of homes.

The Family Safety Program offers the MAPP-TIPS training multiple times throughout the year. During FY18 the program has hosted these classes 4 times

There are currently 38 tribally licensed foster homes. There are 10 families in process of completing licensure.

7. Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan:

As a Title IV-E agency, EBCI will work closely with the local health agencies to ensure that every child obtains appropriate and timely care, as well as obtaining immunizations. Each health update will be made available to the Tribal Court for each review of the child and family case plan.

The medical and health resources for children on the Boundary are very accessible and will address both physical health and well-being as well as behavioral health needs as they are identified, both within and outside of the PHHS organization.

All enrolled members have access to free health care through the Cherokee Indian Hospital (CIH). CIH also accepts Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance to pay for services. In addition, any child in the custody of the EBCI receives behavioral health services through Analenisgi and the Family Safety Program will ensure that any other costs are covered.

There have been no changes in the health care oversight and coordination plan.

8. Disaster Plan:

See Attached. There have been no changes in the disaster plan since last year's submission.

9. Certification of Population Count:

See Attached.

10. Training:

See attached training plan. No change since the last submission.

Section D. Chafee Foster Care Independence & Education & Training Vouchers Program:

EBCI recognizes the need to ensure that our youth have the support and resources that they need to leave the foster care system and be a contributing part of the Cherokee community. We request a funding allocation for FY 2019 for the purposes of developing, defining and structuring the EBCI Independent Living Program. During that funding period we will ensure that the transition plan for youth fourteen and over is filed with the court, as well as supporting children who may age out of foster care. The Family Safety Program has laid out its responsibility to youth using Independent Living Program and those transitioning out of foster care at section 5121-5130 of the Policy and Procedure manual (policy attached). In summary the policy addresses pregnant and parenting youth; assessment and learning plan; responsibilities to youth 12 and older; transition planning for dependent youth 15-18; extended foster care program; and support services.

Number of children in foster care:

At this time, we have a foster care population of approximately 89 children in our care and custody.