



# SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENT TOOLS IN TRIBAL CHILD WELFARE

These resources can help child welfare professionals explore or start the process of finding the best safety and risk assessment tools to meet the unique needs of their respective communities.

Assessing safety and risk is critical for protecting tribal children and creating services that support parents and family members to nurture and safeguard their children. However, widely used child welfare safety and risk assessment tools may not seem right for use in tribal child welfare. These tools may give little consideration to cultural differences in child rearing and often fail to recognize how kin and community protect and support tribal children and families, resulting in an incomplete picture of strengths and challenges. In response, tribal programs often consider adapting existing tools or creating new tools to meet their specific needs. If your program is interested in exploring or starting such a process, the resources included here can help.

## SELECTING AND ADAPTING AN ASSESSMENT TOOL

### [Selecting an Assessment Tool](#)

This resource from the Center for Tribes provides tips and ideas to consider when selecting an assessment tool specific to the needs of families in Indian Country.

### [Child Safety and Risk Assessments in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities](#)

This brief from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, US DHHS, includes a focus on assessment adaptations and implications for tribal communities as well as an exploration of the importance of cultural appropriateness in assessments.

### [Assessing Risk: A Comparison of Tools for Child Welfare Practice with Indigenous Families](#)

While highlighting the lack of tools developed with or for native populations, this document provides a review of commonly used assessment tools, as well as research-based recommendations on how to collaborate with state partners to make adaptations for indigenous communities.

## TYPES OF TOOLS DEFINED:

### ACTUARIAL AND CONSENSUS-BASED

**Actuarial** uses statistical procedures to identify, analyze, weigh, and predict future maltreatment.

**Consensus-Based** is a hybrid approach, blending multiple tools so the assessment can fit the user's needs.

The authors of [Assessing Risk: A Comparison of Tools for Child Welfare Practice with Indigenous Families](#), referenced within this document, do an excellent job of clarifying these two types of tools.



## CONDUCTING SAFETY AND RISK ASSESSMENTS IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES

The Center for Tribes has developed several tools for those in the field, focused on successfully conducting assessments with families.

### Considerations in Conducting Family Assessments

This Center for Tribes resource provides an overview of principles for successfully engaging families in the assessment process, tips for preparing for an assessment, practice considerations in conducting an assessment, and guidance for selecting an assessment tool—all from a strengths-based approach.

### How to Prepare for a Family Assessment

This resource from the Center for Tribes offers brief guidance and helpful tips to keep in mind when working with families.

### Working with Families

This Center for Tribes e-learning acknowledges family strengths and resilience while reviewing how families are impacted by poverty, disparity, and trauma.

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD: CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ADAPTING OR CREATING ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Some tribes that have adapted existing tools shared the following suggestions for taking on this work:

- Examining and identifying your tribe's values when you start this process is essential. It's important to think about what values both your native child welfare professionals and families will be bringing to this process.
- Tribes emphasized the importance of engaging Tribal Leaders when determining how these tools align with your tribe's values.
- Tribes also emphasized the value of creating multi-disciplinary teams to both learn what is needed from different perspectives and to create transparency within the community.

### TOOLS SHARED BY TRIBES

The Center's Tools from Tribes section of our website features examples of risk assessment tools used by tribes. Browse the Risk and Assessment page to see them all.

Have a tool you can share? We can include it on our Tools from Tribes section so other tribes can benefit. Contact Esther Anne at [esther.anne@maine.edu](mailto:esther.anne@maine.edu) with any questions or to share a tool or form!