

Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) Tribal TANF Program

I. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe plan to create a Tribal TANF Program which will also be known as Tribal Family Assistance Program

A. Goal

The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's intent is to provide welfare-related services to persons who are enrolled or eligible for enrollment in the six Tribal Nations (Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, and White Earth Band of Ojibwe) with the goal of creating a Tribal TANF Program. The purpose is to assist Indigenous families in need by providing support and services, including education and training programs, in order to end dependency in a manner that meets the unique culturally needs of Indigenous families in Northern Minnesota.

B. Assurances - Statement about Review and Comment on TANF plan

The MCT will conduct a forty-five (45) day Public Comment Period to educate the six Tribal nations members and its elected officials on the Tribal TANF Program. This period will begin September 13, 2021, and end October 28, 2021. Copies of the plan will be distributed to the MCT Human Services Subcommittee, Tribal Elected Officials, and their Executive Directors and/or Human Services Directors. The Tribal TANF plan will also be placed on the MCT website for public comment. It will also be distributed to the Minnesota counties located within the service delivery area.

C. The Tribal TANF Program will be reviewed by the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Human Services Subcommittee and their feedback will be included in this application, furthermore the Tribal TANF Program has obtained a resolution from the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Tribal Executive Committee. The resolution was passed which allows the MCT Human Services Employment Services Division to pursue Tribal TANF designation.

D. Description of Assistance and Services

- i. Supportive Services – The Tribal TANF Program may provide supportive services to participants to support efforts to find and keep employment. These services include but are not limited to:
 - a. Automotive repair
 - b. Automobile insurance
 - c. Automobile tires
 - d. Bus passes
 - e. Gas vouchers
 - f. Interview/work clothing
 - g. Work equipment/work tools
 - h. Meal assistance
 - i. Union dues
 - j. Background check
 - k. Cell phone/phone card

- l. Training/Education certification
- m. Driver's license reinstatement fee
- n. Title transfer fee
- o. Taxicab
- p. Incentive awards
- q. Education incentives
- r. Other needs

E. Confidentiality

All staff with access to records, files, information, or systems related to the MCT Tribal TANF Program will comply with the Federal Data Privacy Act. This includes having participants sign a release of information form.

The MCT Tribal Personnel Policies outline that employee must respect the confidentiality of records and information received in the course of employment. Information on program participants must be kept with the strictest confidentiality.

The person the data is about or that person's authorized representative must be allowed access to the private data. When participants are asked to provide confidential or private data they must be informed of the following: 1) The purpose and intended use of the requested data; 2) Whether they may refuse to share the data or whether the law requires them to supply the data; 3) The consequences of supplying or refusing to supply the data; and, 4) The identity of other people or entities authorized to receive the data.

Every employment services counselor must complete annual data privacy training. The state provides this training. It explains the difference between private and confidential information as well as what practices meet data privacy standards.

Security clearance must be approved and obtained for those staff that will be authorized to access the MAXIS system to perform the functions necessary to the provision of services and administration of the MCT Tribal TANF Program.

F. Appeals Process/Grievances

During the application process, participants will be advised of their right to appeal. To initiate a grievance, the participant must submit a letter in writing to the Human Services Director and a copy to the Review Panel describing the grievance in detail. The Review Panel will consist of two Employment Specialists, Human Services Director and Executive Director. The Review Panel will review the complaint within 10 days of receipt and a decision will be made regarding the request. A written response by the Human Services Director will be sent to the participant and a copy will be given to the Review Panel.

II. Specify whether the welfare-related services will be provided directly by the Tribe or through agreements, contracts or compacts with intertribal consortia, States, or other entities.

- A. Designated Agency – The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Human Services Division is the designated lead agency responsible for the day-to-day operations and administration of

benefits for the MCT Tribal TANF Program. The main office is located in Cass Lake, Minnesota with two other locations in Duluth and Virginia.

- B. Coordination/Collaboration with other agencies/programs - It will be through the coordination of services between the MCT's Tribal TANF program and the Native Employment Works (NEW) program that participants will be served. The NEW program provides support services for job readiness, training, and employment services and will be administered by the Tribal Employment Specialist and Human Services Division Director.

Workforce Centers are established throughout Minnesota in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. One of the MCT's Employment Specialist is located in the Virginia Career Center. They provide space rental for the Tribal Employment Program and work in collaboration with services such as job club, job search and employment training.

Tribal Employment Specialist work with public, private, and tribal sector employers to solicit job openings, training, or volunteer opportunities to learn employment knowledge and skills for program participants.

- C. Period Covered by the MCT Tribal TANF Program. The MCT intends to operate a TANF program beginning January 2022 through December 2024, a three-year participation period.

III. Identify the population and service area to be served.

- A. Needy Families. Only needy families may receive any federally funded assistance and any benefits and services pursuant to the TANF Program. Needy means financial deprived based on income and resources to meet basic needs.
- B. Financial Eligibility. "Needy family" is defined as the total family income equal or less than 125% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for cash assistance. The family must include at least one person in the assistance unit who is enrolled or eligible for enrollment in the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe and reside within the service delivery area. Per capita distributions, child support payments, social security, and education scholarships/loans will not count towards earnings. Participants will be able to self-declare their income and other resources. Information will be verify with paystubs.

The Tribal TANF Program defines an eligible "Indian family" as a caregiver who is responsible for the care and supervision of a dependent child under the age of eighteen (18) who lives with them. The caregiver is related to the dependent child in one of the following ways: biological parent, adoptive parent, blood relative (i.e. siblings, aunts, uncles, first cousins, first cousins once removed, nephew or nieces) and stepfathers, stepmothers, stepbrothers, and stepsisters including stepchildren.

- C. Service Population – The service population that the Tribal TANF Program shall provide program services are individuals who are enrolled or eligible for enrollment in the MCT and who meet the following condition: unemployed and under-employed individuals who meet the financial eligibility guidelines and who live in the designated service area. It is estimated that the service population will be approximately 100 participants.

- D. Service Delivery Area – Tribal TANF will serve two Minnesota counties (Cook and St. Louis). These counties are located in central and northern half of Minnesota and are all on or near the six member Indian reservations of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. Exclusions include:
 - i. Enrolled members of the Fond du Band living in St. Louis County who will be served by the Fond du Lac Band TANF programs.

IV. Provide that families receiving assistance under the Tribal plan may not receive duplicative assistance from a State or other Tribe.

- A. Non-duplication of services – MCT Tribal TANF will work with counties and other tribal TANF agencies in ensuring that services are not being duplicated. The Tribal TANF staff will have access to the State of Minnesota’s electronic management information system, MAXIS.

At the time of application, Tribal and county financial workers will enter the application information data regarding the applicant and their household into the MAXIS system. This system is capable of cross-referencing applications and will indicate if the applicant is receiving assistance from a county or Tribal cash assistance program within the State of Minnesota. If the system indicates that the applicant is currently receiving assistance from another county, the Tribal TANF Program will contact that county and request a transfer of the file. If the applicant has left Minnesota’s service area, the county will transfer the case to the Tribal TANF Program. Eligibility and assistance will continue without interruption because both programs are utilizing the MAXIS system to monitor the cases and approve issuances.

V. Identify the employment opportunities in or near the service area and the manner in which the Tribe will cooperate and enhance such opportunities for recipients consistent with any applicable State standards.

- A. Employment Opportunities – the service area would include two Minnesota counties: St. Louis and Cook. Employment opportunities include major employers such as the tribal businesses and its casinos, restaurants, retail stores, etc. Duluth is the largest city in St. Louis County and has a population of approximately 85,000. The most common jobs held by residents of Duluth, by number of employees, are office and administrative support occupations. The highest paying industries in Duluth by median earning are utilities, management of companies and enterprises, mining, quarrying, oil, and gas extraction. Virginia, a city in northern St. Louis County, is a region heavily dependent on manufacturing particularly iron ore. There are many small businesses located within or near Cook County which cater to tourism. Finding full-time, year-round employment may be more difficult in some rural areas of Northern Minnesota.

VI. Apply the fiscal accountability provisions of section 5(f)(1) of the Indian Self-Determination Act (25 U.S.C. 450c(f)(1)), relating to the submission of a single-State agency audit report in accordance with 31 USC Chapter 75.

- A. Fiscal Accountability Assurance – MCT has internal controls in place to provide for reasonable assurance that federal/state awards are managed in compliance with federal/state program requirements. In addition, a single audit is completed by an outside

auditing firm, on a yearly basis, and submitted to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse, in order to satisfy compliance with fiscal accountability provisions as stated above.

- B. Tribal Resolution – Resolution 77-17 was recommended for approval by the MCT Human Services Subcommittee to the MCT Tribal Executive Committee at a meeting held on May 30, 2017. The resolution was passed which allows the MCT Human Services Employment Services Division to pursue Tribal TANF designation.

VII. Data Collection and Reporting

- A. The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Tribal TANF Program will comply with all the statutory and regulatory data collection and reporting requirements pertaining to Tribal TANF.
- B. MCT Tribal TANF will use the “Hard 8” rule and follow the state requirements.

VIII. Minimum Work Participation Requirements and Work Participation Rates

- A. All Families Work Requirements

Year	Rate
Minimum Participation Rate for Year 1	20%
Minimum Participation Rate for Year 2	22%
Minimum Participation Rate for Year 3	25%

- B. All Families Weekly Work Hour Requirements

Year	One Parent	Two Parent
Minimum Participation Rate for Year 1	20	25
Minimum Participation Rate for Year 2	20	25
Minimum Participation Rate for Year 3	20	25

IX. Work Activities

- A. The following is a partial list of approved work activities:
 - i. Job search
 - ii. Travel time
 - iii. Subsidized employment
 - iv. Unsubsidized employment
 - v. Work experience
 - vi. On the job training/apprenticeship
 - vii. Community service/volunteer
 - viii. Post-secondary or vocational educational training
 - ix. Job skills training directly related to employment
 - x. Job club
 - xi. Conferences/workshops
 - xii. Education directly related to employment
 - xiii. Small business training
 - xiv. Satisfactory attendance in post-secondary courses
 - xv. Children’s education to include school conferences
 - xvi. Culturally relevant work activities

B. Good cause exemptions – The Tribal TANF Program may exempt certain individuals from work requirements based on:

- Lack of reliable transportation
- Illness- must be verified by a doctor
- Extreme weather conditions
- Family crisis
- Extenuating circumstances as determined by the TANF Director
- Pregnant females who are experiencing medical complications
- Females during the eight weeks after giving birth
- Person is age 55 or over
- Person unable to participate due to disabling condition
- Victim of Domestic Violence
- Parent unable to obtain childcare for a child under 6 years old
- Death of an immediate family member as defined by “Indian family” in Tribal TANF Program

All of these examples would be considered “good cause” exemptions due to the difficulty in finding and keeping employment as well as personal issues that may affect a person’s ability to work. There may be other extenuating circumstances that justify “good cause” and will be considered on a case-by-case bases by the Human Services Director and Employment Specialist.

X. Time Limits – (to include exemptions)

- A. When the household reaches 60-month time limit, cash assistance will end except in these situations: 1) Medical reasons; 2) Working part/full-time but still meets the financial assistance eligibility requirements; and 3) Family violence waiver. All three of these examples would be considered hardship exemptions due to the difficulty in finding and keeping employment as well as personal issues that may affect a person’s ability to work. Up to 20% of the total caseload may be exempted.
- B. Transitional services. No cash assistance will be dispersed after the participant reaches the 60-month time limit. However, transitional period will be for six (6) months post-TANF and include the following services:

XI. Penalties/Sanctions

- A. If a participant refuses to engage in employment as required by the Tribal TANF program in absence of good cause, their cash assistance may be reduced by 10%, or their assistance terminated, or the Tribal TANF program may provide limited cash assistance for basic needs through vouchers. The voucher system will allow for partial payment of utilities and housing only. This would be determined on a case-by-case basis by Human Services Director and Tribal Employment Specialist.
- B. A participant that refuses to cooperate shall be subject to sanctions as specified in this section. The assistance unit’s grant will be reduced by twenty five percent (25%) of the transitional standard for that household size. The residual amount of the grant, if any, must

be paid to the caregiver. A sanction under this section becomes effective ten (10) days after the required notice is given. The sanction must remain in effect for a minimum of one month and shall be removed only when the caregiver cooperates with the support requirements.

XII. Child Support Enforcement

- A. Caregivers with children must help pursue child and spousal support, medical support, and childcare support. Failure to help get these kinds of support will result in a sanction or loss of benefits, unless the caregiver with children shows good cause for not cooperating.

The local Child Support Agency is responsible for getting child and spousal support, childcare support, and medical support from non-custodial parents. An automated referral will be made by the MAXIS computer system for the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's Tribal TANF Program to the Child Support Agency within two working days of the day it is determined the child or pregnant women is eligible, even if the caregiver or pregnant woman claim good cause.

XIII. Childcare Defined

- A. Appropriate childcare. Childcare where the provider is licensed/certified or registered by a State or Tribal childcare agency, or childcare provided in the child's home or home of a relative of the child, provided the home is a clean, safe, and supervised environment and is acceptable to the caregiver of the child.
- B. Reasonable distance. Total distance from caregiver's home to the childcare provider site can not exceed thirty (30) miles one-way.
- C. Unsuitability of informal childcare. Childcare is deemed as inappropriate and/or unacceptable by participant due to concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the child and is put in writing.
- D. Affordable childcare. Formal or informal childcare at a cost that is acceptable to the caregivers without causing undue financial hardship.

XIV. Overpayment of Benefits

- A. Recoupment will occur once discovery of the overpayment is noted. Date and amount of the overpayment will be determined by the Financial Worker and confirmed by the Human Services Director. Overpayment will be recouped from the next month's cash assistance.

XV. Fraud

- A. Financial Worker and Employment Specialist will notify Human Services Director. Human Services Director will notify the police department and file charges against the participant.

The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe's intent is to provide welfare-related services to eligible members with the goal of creating a Tribal TANF Program that provides services to end dependency in a manner that meets the unique culturally needs of Indigenous families in Northern Minnesota.

The overall operations, service provision, and administration will be based on the information provided in this plan and attachments to it. Specific and detailed policies will be developed that will be treated as an addendum to this plan. The policies will be submitted to the Human Services Subcommittee and the Tribal Executive Committee for approval and will be developed with input from the tribal communities and other resources. The policies, any subsequent amendments, or revisions to the plan will be in compliance with federal rules and regulations.

Submitted by: _____ **Date:** _____