

**RCW 26.25.010 Purpose.** The legislature recognizes that Indian tribes are sovereign nations and the relationship between the state and the tribe is sovereign-to-sovereign.

The federal government acknowledged the importance of including Indian tribes in child support systems established by the federal government and the states. The personal responsibility and work opportunity reconciliation act of 1996, P.L. 104-193, provides Indian tribes the option of developing their own tribal plan and tribal child support enforcement program to receive funds directly from the federal government for their own Title IV-D program similar to that of other states. The act also expressly authorizes the states and Indian tribe or tribal organization to enter into cooperative agreements to provide for the delivery of child support enforcement services.

It is the purpose of this chapter to encourage the department of social and health services, division of child support, and the Indian tribes within the state's borders to enter into cooperative agreements that will assist the state and tribal governments in carrying out their respective responsibilities. The legislature recognizes that the state and the tribes each possess resources that are sometimes distinct to that government. The legislature intends that the state and the tribes work together to make the most efficient and productive use of all resources and authorities.

Cooperative agreements will enable the state and the tribes to better provide child support services to Indian children and to establish and enforce child support obligations, orders, and judgments. Under cooperative agreements, the state and the tribes can work as partners to provide culturally relevant child support services, consistent with state and federal laws, that are based on tribal laws and customs. The legislature recognizes that the preferred method for handling cases where all or some of the parties are enrolled tribal members living on the tribal reservation is to develop an agreement so that appropriate cases are referred to the tribe to be processed in the tribal court. The legislature recognizes that cooperative agreements serve the best interests of the children.  
[1997 c 386 s 60.]