

**Testimony**  
**Interim Tribal and State Relations Committee**  
**Representative Merle Boucher, Chairman**  
**January 31, 2008**

Chairman Boucher, members of the Tribal and State Relations Committee, I am Mike Schwindt, Child Support Enforcement Director with the Department of Human Services. I am here to provide an update of the interactions between the tribes and the state on child support enforcement services.

Since the committee's meeting last September, we have continued to work with tribes to resolve jurisdictional issues and improve the delivery of child support enforcement services for tribal children, particularly in the area of information sharing:

- We recently met in Devils Lake with a judge from the Turtle Mountain Tribal Court to discuss interactions between the Tribe and the state child support enforcement program. This discussion specifically covered data sharing and case handling, since one of the attorneys in the Devils Lake Regional Child Support Enforcement Unit now regularly appears in tribal court.
- Three Affiliated Tribes and the program have signed an amendment to our cooperative agreement to give the Tribe's child support enforcement program access to our computer system, which is where our case data is stored. The agreement ensures that the information will remain confidential and will be used only for child support enforcement purposes. We will be installing a computer at the tribal office that can be used to access the information. We also

understand that the Tribe has submitted a request to delay the startup of its program until April 1, 2008.

More and more, we are finding that we are enforcing a child support case based on incomplete data, or at the same time that a tribal court is enforcing a case. This makes it even more critical that Tribes and our program develop a way to exchange case information frequently, especially payment data.

At the same time we are promoting partnerships and collaboration with the Tribes, we are also improving our internal handling of tribal cases. Recently, we formed a tribal workgroup from the staff in our program to specialize in tribal case processing. This group includes the caseworkers and attorneys in the regional offices who regularly deal with tribal cases and tribal courts. The group is charged with improving our effectiveness and consistency in handling tribal cases, to ensure we are doing as much as we can to obtain support for tribal children.

We are excited to see continued Tribal interest in child support enforcement, and are committed to supporting their efforts as much as possible. Our goal is to have a world class program – to reach it, we know there is more that can be done for tribal children.

That concludes my testimony. I'd be happy to answer questions.