

TRIBAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT



Spring has arrived...well, at least as far as the calendar is concerned it has! ☺ Progress continues with the research and planning of the Tribe's Tribal Court system. I would like to thank each of you who participated in the Needs Assessment survey. This survey gave clear indication that there is strong, community support in favor of a Tribal Court system. That's wonderful!

Last month, the focus was on an introduction to peacemaking courts. This month, the subject is wellness courts. This court is known in the westernized court system as a Drug Court. However, for Native Americans, wellness courts incorporate a very different approach than in a Drug Court. Below is a brief introduction to what a wellness court is all about.

Wellness Courts bring together community-healing resources with the tribal justice process, using a team approach to achieve the physical and spiritual healing of the participant (individual struggling with substance abuse, violence, etc.) and the well-being of the community. Participants enter the wellness court program through various referral points and legal procedures while protecting their due process rights.

Eligible substance abuse offenders are identified early through legal and clinical screening for eligibility and are promptly placed in the Wellness Program. This court provides access to holistic, structured and phased, substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation services that include culture and tradition.

Participants are monitored through intensive supervision that includes frequent and random testing for alcohol and other substance use. Progressive consequences (or sanctions) and rewards (or incentives) are used to encourage participant compliance with program requirements. Ongoing judicial interaction with each participant and judicial involvement in team staffing is essential. Monitoring and evaluation measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness to meet three purposes:

- ✓ Providing information to improve the Healing to Wellness process;*
- ✓ Overseeing participant progress; and*
- ✓ Preparing evaluative information for interested community groups and funding sources*

Continuing interdisciplinary education promotes effective wellness court planning, implementation, and operation. The development of ongoing communication, coordination, and cooperation among team members, the community and relevant organizations are critical for program success.

Being watching for next month's newsletter and for a special mailing regarding an informational meeting for the membership to learn more about this very, important addition to the services offered to the Tribe. This is your opportunity to voice your opinion and to offer your suggestions. Community input and trust is very important to the success of this program. ☺

*Our next Project Advisory Team Committee meeting is on April 7, 2008, at 4:00 p.m. in the Chairman's office. If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this project further, please feel free to contact me at the office or via email. Our next Committee meeting is **Monday, March 10, at 4 p.m. in the Chairman's Office.** This system is designed to serve the membership; so, your input is vital. Please feel free to join us. My contact information is:*

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