

Tribal Affiliation: Essential Understandings for Parents and Families

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What Is Tribal Affiliation?

- Tribal affiliation is a **self-reported connection with a Tribe or Tribes**. It is the Tribe or Tribes someone feels they belong to.
- Tribal affiliation is **not the same as race/ethnicity or Tribal enrollment/citizenship**. Tribes are sovereign nations that set their own citizenship requirements and maintain their own data on their members. Tribal enrollment information must be verified by the Tribe; it can't be self-reported.
- People can be affiliated with more than one Tribe and with federal, state, or unacknowledged Tribes. They can self-identify as affiliated for several reasons, such as citizenship or descendency, which usually means that they have a parent grandparent who is an enrolled Tribal citizen, even if they are not a citizen themselves.

Why Does Tribal Affiliation Matter to Schools?

- It helps support **data sharing between school districts and Tribes** by allowing Tribes to access data specific to students affiliated with their Tribe, as opposed to all students who self-identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN).
- It can help schools **apply for additional funds or supports for students** who provide Tribal affiliation information. Each program has different rules, and Tribal affiliation data can help schools and Tribes figure out which students qualify. Schools may also need additional information for students to take part in some programs.
- It can help hold districts accountable for serving Native students. This can lead to stronger relationships with Tribes and better communication with families and parent committees.
- It can help **support truly culturally responsive teaching**, which helps all students succeed.

Why Am I Being Asked for My Child's Tribal Affiliation?

- Tribes, districts, and states are interested in improving student identification, data sharing, and programs for Native students. To do this, families in some states and districts are asked to include students' Tribal affiliation on school district enrollment or program forms.
- This information can help Tribes ask districts and states for data about their Tribe's students specifically. **It can also help districts and schools identify Native students who are eligible for federal, state, or Tribal programs that provide cultural or academic support.**

See reverse side to explore ways school districts might ask for your child's Tribal affiliation information.

How Might I Be Asked for My Child's Tribal Affiliation?

School districts have different ways of asking for Tribal affiliation. The following are three examples. *Note that these examples are based on real-life scenarios but do not use real names or school districts.*

Registration Packet

Ana and her family recently moved to School District #201. Ana and their mother identify as Native American and are enrolled members of the Onondaga Nation. When their family registered Ana for the new school year, their **registration packet included a paper copy of the forms for participating in education programs for Native students**. The district's central office secretary explained that this is **to ensure all new students are appropriately and accurately identified at the time of registration**. Once completed, the secretary gave the paper forms to the Title VI program coordinator. The next day, the program coordinator reached out to Ana and their family to welcome Ana and share more details about program services.

Coordinator Outreach

Kateri and her siblings started attending the Mountain Valley Unified School District a few months after the start of the school year. When their grandmother registered the children, she indicated American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and Black on their registration forms. The school district has a **dedicated program coordinator who reaches out to all students and families who have self-identified as AI/AN alone or in combination with other races**. Twice a year (at the start of each semester), the program coordinator receives a list of all students identified as AI/AN. In January, Kateri's grandmother received a **letter and phone call from the coordinator to inquire about their Tribal affiliation**. On the phone, Kateri's grandmother shared that the children's father is an enrolled member of Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation but the children are not. The coordinator was able to explain that the children are eligible for services and assist their grandmother with completing the required eligibility forms sent in the mail.

Online Data Portal

Camacho School District serves a student body with affiliations to multiple Tribes and Pueblos in the region. The school district recently began using an **online student data portal to collect Tribal affiliation data and eligibility forms for Title VI**. Juan has attended the school in the district since kindergarten. Shortly after the start of his seventh-grade year, his parents received an email from the district to notify them of the new data collection effort and **provide instructions for entering Juan's information in the student data portal**. Juan's father then used his **secure log-in** to add Juan's affiliations with the Navajo Nation and the Pueblo of Jemez.

Tribal affiliation questions are there to help your student get services and help Tribes and districts share information that can support their growth and success.