

Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty

Minnesota is home to eleven federally recognized Tribal Nations, each a sovereign government with the right to self-govern and self-determine. Our relationship with them is government-to-government, nation to state, not agency to stakeholder. That distinction shapes everything about how this work is done.

Content

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What sovereignty means here. Tribal Nations are not one more community group to consult. They are governments. Minnesota law affirms their sovereignty and requires the state to build relationships on respect, understanding, and meaningful consultation. Each Tribe is distinct, with its own government, culture, and priorities.

What meaningful consultation requires.

- Government-to-government. The state engages Tribal Nations as full partners and equals.
- Early and ongoing. Consultation begins at the earliest stages of a decision and continues throughout, not as a sign-off at the end.
- Relationship-based. It depends on trust built over time, through people, not paperwork.
- Respectful of difference. What works with one Tribal Nation may not fit another.

How it works in our administration. Tribal consultation is led at the administration level, with the Disability Services Division contributing on matters that affect its work. Staff support the process; they do not stand in for it.

An honest boundary. This is human-led, relationship-based, government-to-government work. It cannot be automated, summarized into a shortcut, or simulated. When a matter calls for Tribal consultation, it goes to the people who hold those relationships. If you are unsure, route it to the consultant.

This is a working summary for staff, not legal or policy guidance. For specifics, follow current state and administration direction.

Choose the relevant guidance, verify fit and currency, and apply it to the work product using Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty.

Confirm the current purpose, audience, and decision authority before using Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty to choose the relevant guidance, verify fit and currency, and apply it to the work product.

Choose the sections of Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty that match the situation; do not apply unrelated guidance as a blanket rule.

Document the action taken from Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty, the people affected, unresolved questions, and the responsible follow-up owner.

Check the stated limitations and evidence status for Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty; escalate when current authority or individual context is missing.

Review the result with the affected person, team, or community and revise the find and apply guidance approach when it creates a barrier or unintended effect.

For community engagement staff, use Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty to choose the relevant guidance, verify fit and currency, and apply it to the work product; plan accessible participation, make influence visible, and close the feedback loop with community partners. Start by choose the relevant guidance, verify fit and currency, and apply it to the work product using Tribal Consultation and Sovereignty.

Do not replace official legal, policy, clinical, supervisory, program, or Tribal authority.

Do not infer an individual's identity, preferences, needs, or experience from group-level information.

State uncertainty, use current authoritative sources, and escalate when the decision exceeds the user's role.

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