



Montana Tribal Advocate Incubator Project

The Montana Tribal Advocate Incubator Project (TAIP) is a project of Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA). The initiative seeks to partner with Tribal Courts located in Montana in order to recruit, train, mentor, and support Tribal Lay Advocates. Participating Tribal Lay Advocates will represent tribal members in Tribal Court with common civil legal matters, including divorce and custody, landlord-tenant disputes, wills and probate, real estate and land issues.

Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA)

MLSA is a private, nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal aid to low-income Montanans in all counties and Tribal Reservations with 20 attorneys to represent clients from offices based in Missoula, Billings, and Helena. The Montana Legal Services Association's mission is to protect and enhance the civil legal rights of, and promote systemic change for, Montanans living in poverty. In 2020, MLSA advocates handled 4,736 cases and provided services to 11,543 adults and children across the state.

What is the goal of the Tribal Advocate Incubator Project?

The goal of the project is to train and equip Tribal Advocates with the skills and support needed to run their own legal practice in Tribal Court so that they can increase access to justice within their own community.

What are the benefits to TAIP participants?

MLSA will train and mentor Tribal Lay Advocates. Training will be provided remotely and in-person and will be tailored to meet the needs of the participants and Tribes taking part in the program. Training will focus on legal advocacy, court representation, and also the basics of how to run your own business.

In addition Tribal Lay Advocates will receive:

- Travel stipend for in-person training
- \$1,000 stipend for office equipment and start-up costs;
- Supplement to cover costs of the Tribal Bar exam; and,
- Ongoing mentorship and case referrals from MLSA.

What is the cost to participate?

The program is free to participants, however MLSA does ask that participants provide pro bono and modest means services to MLSA clients.

How will participating Tribal Advocates be paid?

Participating Tribal Advocates will receive training on how to run their own legal practice. Tribal Advocates can set their own fees for representation. However, participating Advocates must agree to charge clients referred by MLSA no more than the Modest Means rate.

What is the Modest Means rate?

The Modest Means rate is between \$60 and \$120 an hour, depending on the client's income and other factors.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

You can connect with the Tribal Advocacy Incubator Project Coordinator, Valerie Falls Down, at 406-248-7113 x 322 or by cell phone at 406-438-3646 or via email at vfallsdo@mtlsa.org to learn more about the Tribal Advocate Initiative Project and how to participate.