



# TRIBAL SECURITY OFFICER


A Tribal Security Resource Toolkit — National Native Justice Institute | [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us)


## ■ THE TRIBAL SECURITY OFFICER IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Tribal security officers serve as the primary non-law-enforcement safety presence across tribal housing, health facilities, government buildings, cultural events, and community programs. In many tribal communities — particularly those with limited tribal police capacity or remote geography — security officers are the first point of contact for safety concerns, disturbances, trespassing, and low-level incidents. Their role is distinct from sworn law enforcement but equally important to community safety and institutional trust.

 Tribal security officers are not sworn law enforcement. Their authority is derived from tribal ordinance, employment policy, and property management authority — not from police powers.

 Understanding the boundary between security authority and law enforcement authority is one of the most critical competencies a tribal security officer must master.

 Security officers who build genuine relationships with community members are more effective deterrents, better at de-escalating conflict, and more likely to receive timely information about safety threats.

 Every contact a security officer makes — routine or serious — should be documented. Consistent, accurate documentation protects the officer, the tribe, and the community.

## ■ SCOPE OF AUTHORITY FOR TRIBAL SECURITY OFFICERS

### What Tribal Security Officers Can Do

- Observe and report suspicious activity, safety hazards, and policy violations to tribal management and law enforcement.
- Conduct patrols of tribal property, facilities, housing areas, and event venues as assigned by the employing tribal program.
- Ask individuals to comply with tribal facility rules, codes of conduct, and trespass policies and request that they leave tribal property when authorized by management.
- Detain individuals for a brief, reasonable period — citizen's detention — when there is clear evidence of a serious crime and law enforcement has been notified. This authority is narrow and must be grounded in tribal ordinance.
- Provide first aid and emergency assistance as trained, and coordinate with medical and law enforcement responders.
- Control access to restricted tribal facilities, verify credentials, and enforce visitor protocols as directed by facility management.

### What Tribal Security Officers Cannot Do

- Make criminal arrests unless expressly authorized by tribal ordinance and trained accordingly. Unauthorized arrests expose the officer and the tribe to serious civil liability.
- Use force beyond what is objectively reasonable and necessary to protect themselves or others from immediate harm. Any force used must be documented immediately.
- Conduct searches of persons or property without legal authority. Unless the individual consents, or a specific tribal ordinance authorizes the search, security officers should not search.
- Carry firearms unless specifically authorized, trained, and certified under tribal policy and applicable tribal or federal law.
- Purport to be law enforcement officers or misrepresent their authority to community members, visitors, or other agencies.

## ■ CORE COMPETENCIES FOR TRIBAL SECURITY OFFICERS

### Observation & Documentation

- Develop strong observation skills: what is out of place, who is present and why, what has changed since the last patrol, and what behaviors indicate elevated risk.
- Write clear, objective, chronological incident reports for every significant contact. Document time, location, parties involved, actions taken, and outcome.
- Use specific, behavioral language in all reports. "Individual was argumentative and refused to leave after three requests" is objective. "Individual was being difficult" is not.

### De-escalation & Communication

- De-escalation is the primary tool of every effective security officer. Use calm voice, appropriate distance, and non-threatening body posture as your first response to every conflict.
- Introduce yourself clearly, explain your role, and state your concern or request before issuing any directive. Transparency reduces resistance.
- Recognize trauma responses — aggression, withdrawal, or apparent intoxication — and adjust your communication approach accordingly. Do not escalate a situation that can be resolved through patience.

### Cultural Competency

- Understand the cultural context of the community you serve, including protocols around elders, cultural events, ceremonial activities, and traditional practices.

- Apply tribal values of respect, relationship, and community responsibility in every interaction. Security work in Indian Country is community service, not enforcement.
- Build relationships with residents, patients, clients, and staff in the facilities you patrol. Familiarity builds trust and generates the information that prevents incidents.

## ■ TIPS FOR TRIBAL SECURITY OFFICERS

- **Know Your Authority — Know Its Limits** – Read and understand your tribal ordinance, employment policy, and facility rules of conduct before your first shift. Exceeding your authority is as dangerous as failing to act.
- **Document Every Contact** – Routine or serious, document it. Consistent documentation protects you from false allegations, supports law enforcement investigations, and demonstrates professional practice.
- **Build Relationships on Every Patrol** – Security effectiveness is built on familiarity and trust. Know the names and faces of the people you protect. This is your most powerful safety tool.
- **Call Law Enforcement Early** – When a situation exceeds your authority or training — weapons, serious assault, mental health crisis — call tribal police or 911 immediately. Do not attempt to handle it alone.
- **Never Misrepresent Your Authority** – Do not imply you have arrest powers you do not have. Misrepresenting your authority to community members or other agencies creates serious legal liability.

## RESOURCES, GRANTS & SUPPORT

Funding, Training, and Support Resources — Tribal Security Officer Programs | [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us)

### ■ FEDERAL GRANT RESOURCES

#### Security & Public Safety Funding

- **COPS Tribal Resources Grant (TRG)** – Funds tribal public safety programs including security staffing, training, and equipment. [cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources](http://cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources)
- **CTAS – Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation** – DOJ consolidated tribal funding applicable to security and law enforcement support programs. [justice.gov/tribal](http://justice.gov/tribal)
- **BJA Tribal Justice Programs** – Supports tribal public safety capacity including security program development. [bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice](http://bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice)

#### Housing & Facility Security

- **HUD – NAHASDA Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG)** – Funds tribal housing operations including security staffing for tribal housing programs. [hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/ih](http://hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih)
- **HUD Native American Housing Assistance Programs** – Supports tribal housing safety and security infrastructure. [hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/ih](http://hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih)
- **IHS Facility Security Programs** – IHS supports facility security planning for tribal health facilities. [ihs.gov](http://ihs.gov)
- **FEMA Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP)** – Annual DHS funding for tribal security and emergency preparedness. [fema.gov/tribal](http://fema.gov/tribal)

### ■ STATE & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **State Private Security Licensing Requirements** – Many states require security officers to be licensed even on tribal land depending on jurisdiction. Consult tribal legal counsel on applicable state licensing requirements.
- **State Homeland Security Grants (SHSGP)** – Tribal security programs may be eligible for state-administered FEMA homeland security funding through the State Administrative Agency (SAA).
- **Tribal Law & Order Act (TLOA) Resources** – TLOA provides expanded authority and technical assistance for tribal public safety programs including security operations.
- **Grants.gov Tribal Search Tool** – Search all federal grants available to tribal entities. [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) (filter: Tribal Government eligibility)

### ■ KEY WEBLINKS

National Native Justice Institute	<a href="http://www.nativejustice.us">www.nativejustice.us</a>
COPS Tribal Resources Grant	<a href="http://cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources">cops.usdoj.gov/tribalresources</a>
BJA Tribal Justice Programs	<a href="http://bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice">bja.ojp.gov/program/tribal-justice</a>
HUD Native American Housing	<a href="http://hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih">hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih</a>
FEMA Tribal Grants	<a href="http://fema.gov/tribal">fema.gov/tribal</a>

### ■ PARTNER WITH NNJI — WE ARE READY TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

**TAKE ACTION TODAY** — Contact NNJI at [www.nativejustice.us](http://www.nativejustice.us) to schedule training, consultation, or access resources.

*Strengthening Tribal Justice — One Community at a Time*