Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Forrest J. Gerard said today the Bureau of Indian Affairs plans to have draft regulations for the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1979 ready for comment by January 31, 1979.

The Act, which was passed during the last session of Congress, 1requires that regulations be published within 180 days.

He said when the draft regulations are completed they will be made available to both on and off-reservation Indian people as well as the general public for comment and consultation.

Gerard said that because of the extremely short time frames the BIA issued a request on January 9 for bids from interested Indian organizations to hold a series of public hearings, These will be held during the month of February and will constitute the consultation process for the draft regulations.

There will be a total of 12 hearings throughout the United States in Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, California, Arizona (2 hearings), Montana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Minnesota, the Southeast and the Northeast parts of the U.S. Each contractor: will hold six hearings, and will prepare summaries of the hearings and will submit recommended draft regulations to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Gerard said the target date for publication of the proposed regulations is mid-March, and there will be the usual period of time for comment. Re said the publication of final regulations by May 1, 1979 will meet the 180 day requirement of the Act.

The Assistant Secretary said it is his judgment that the final regulations, to be published ln May, will be subject to some revision. In the next year or two because of the importance of the legislation.

Re said also some revision may be necessary after the Act is funded and the implementation process begins.