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**HEHSC discusses health care conditions at Kayenta
Health Care Clinic with local residents and I.H.S. representative**

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report on Wednesday, from Kayenta residents regarding their concerns with the current health care conditions at the Kayenta Health Care Clinic.

Kayenta resident Annalita Osif, informed the HEHSC that she is part of a group of constituents who are disappointed with the clinic’s administration and services.

Due to a shortage of staff at the Kayenta Clinic, constituents often have to travel to other hospitals in Tuba City, Monument Valley, Shiprock, and Phoenix, said Osif.

“The HESHSC understands your frustrations with the facility, but we also need to hear how IHS is addressing these issues,” said HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels).

The Kayenta Health Care Clinic currently operates for 40 hours during the week and provides services which including, general medical care, pediatrics, internal medicine, mental health, and women’s health to approximately 20,000 people.

Navajo Area IHS chief medical officer Dr. Douglas Peter, explained the actions the Navajo Area office has taken to improve services and address local concerns.

“We are tackling the biggest challenge of the clinic, which is recruitment, by implementing the Federal Direct Hire Authority,” said Dr. Peter. “Now we can hire the staff we need, like doctors, nurses, and techs, the same day without going through the entire HR process.”

The Federal Direct Hire Authority enables an agency to hire any qualified applicant by eliminating competitive rating and raking, veterans, and “rule of three” procedures during a critical hiring need or severe shortage of candidates.

Dr. Peter also added that patients cannot be turned away from other IHS clinics and hospitals even if they are not apart of their service unit population.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi) said the HEHSC can only provide guidance in this situation and that the local community needs to make IHS an active member in their dialogue in order to address their concerns over the clinic’s administration.

“We are dealing with a federal agency and it can be very complicated when dealing with their funding. You have to access the situation from a broad perspective,” said HEHSC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii).

Delegate Phelps also suggested that the community consider pursuing a P.L. 93-638 Title 1 contract so the facility would operate under local governance control.

Public Law 93-638, Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, authorizes the U.S. Secretaries of the Interior, Health, Education, and other government agencies to enter into contracts with federally recognized tribes. Tribes have the authority to administer the funds, giving them greater control over their welfare.

“We can solve these problems by unifying the health care system and needs of our people,” said Delegate Hale. “Working against each other on different sides doesn’t help anything,”

After a lengthy discussion, Delegate Hale advised Dr. Peter to present IHS’s work to the Kayenta Chapter, to prevent future confusion and demonstrate the area office’s commitment to providing quality health care.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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