



DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR SELF RELIANCE



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**Department For Self Reliance Earns Congratulations from U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services Officials**



DSR Assistant Department Manager, Deannah Neswood-Gishey reports to HHS Officials about the transfer of LIHEAP and P.L.-93 638 programs beginning January 2014.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - On April 22, 2014 the Navajo Division of Health (NDOH) and the Navajo Division of Social Services (NDSS) hosted the Department of Health and Human Services (HSS) at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, AZ for the annual U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Navajo Regional Tribal Consultation.

The Tribal Consultation takes place to allow Tribes and the federal government the opportunity to speak and respond directly to the issues and concerns of each entity.

NDSS's Department for Self Reliance (DSR) and Department for Family Services (DFS) were given an opportunity to speak on behalf of their programs.

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Deannah Neswood-Gishey, DSR's Assistant Department Manager explained the program had grown into a department. "The newly named DSR now administers the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), General Assistance (GA), Burial Assistance (BA) and Emergency Assistance (EA) as well as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)" stated Neswood-Gishey.

NDSS requested to HSS that the DSR's Tribal TANF program maintain its current funding, maintain its unobligated funds in reserve and keep its flexibility to design and operate the program.

"Our issue with TANF is to maintain the flexibility because we have approved work activities that the states do not offer. For example, we have Traditional Practitioners on the Navajo Nation. We are in a unique area and our population has different activities from the states of how they want to grow and develop self-sufficiency," stated Neswood-Gishey.

NDSS also requested to increase the administrative cost cap for the DSR's LIHEAP to be able to hire more employees to assist with LIHEAP's high demand and to award LIHEAP funds before the end of the previous physical year in order to provide heating assistance in a timely manner.

Neswood-Gishey stated, "LIHEAP serves the most in need with the highest energy burden. DSR's LIHEAP program also has a priority system in which the elderly, disabled and children under the age of five in the household are our highest priority. We are finding through our statistics, that we have been achieving the true intent of LIHEAP." Neswood-Gishey continues on to say, "the average head of household age is 59 years old. The average Income for the LIHEAP customers served is \$806 per month. 90% of applicants are under 110% of the national poverty guideline."

There were many congratulations to the DSR in regards to its LIHEAP and TANF program.

"Let me congratulate you on LIHEAP. You are doing a great job on LIHEAP. Some of the things in your issues however may take some legislative changes, but keep doing what you are doing because that is what it is all about. And congratulations on your 35% TANF work participation rate," stated Leon R. McCowan, ACF Regional Administrator, Region Six.

In the spirit of a job well done, Neswood-Gishey brought the LIHEAP Federal Compliance Review to the HSS's attention, "A few months ago Lauren Christopher of ACF and Margarita Valladares of ACF's Region Nine had done site visits on the Navajo Nation. They were very impressed with our services and stated that we had raised the bar for LIHEAP. Our practices would be the comparison for the other visits they were going to make to the other states and tribes."

The requests were appreciated by the federal officials as stated by, Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans, Lillian Sparks-Robinson, "thank you for framing it the way that you did, because that allows us to really understand what the issue is and what the impact is, and what you are requesting for us to take back to Washington D.C. It allows me to have the conversations with my colleagues about TANF, and the LIHEAP dollars, and how they are being put to good use."

For more information please contact, DSR's Public Relations section at 928-810-8553.

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