



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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President Shelly supports Navajo Head Start - CCDF partnership



President Shelly said the Navajo Nation is on a mission to recruit more than 700 students for Navajo Head Start. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

CROWNPPOINT, N.M.— It's all for the children.

Earlier this morning, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with representatives from the Navajo Nation Council, Navajo Head Start, Division of Social Services and the Child Care Development Fund to discuss a new initiative aimed at boosting enrollment.

"These young kids will

be our leaders some day. We must provide them with every advantage to succeed," President Shelly said.

He thanked the staff from Navajo Head Start and Child Care Development Fund for providing the educational foundation necessary for Navajo kids to succeed. Combining the programs together will only benefit the future generations, he added.

"The CCDF classrooms will be used for Navajo Head Start students. By partnering together, Navajo Head Start will have enough classroom space for the student recruitment drive," President Shelly said. "The Navajo Nation is on a mission."

That mission is to enroll more than 700 pre-school students into Navajo Head Start classrooms across the

Navajo Nation before March 31, 2015.

Navajo Head Start passed a federal review on June 4, 2014 and secured a \$125 million five-year grant award from the Administration for Children and Families. Although the program was in compliance with federal mandates, many of their classrooms across the Navajo Nation were in severe need

of repair and replacement in some instances.

By temporarily partnering with the CCDF to secure safe and sanitary classrooms for students, Navajo Head Start is recruiting students to meet enrollment numbers set by the federal Head Start Program.

“If we do not enroll more than 700 kids into Navajo Head Start in the next few weeks, some of that grant award will be returned to the federal treasury,” President Shelly said.

He said passing the federal review to secure the five-year grant award would not have been possible without the collaboration of the Navajo Nation Council Health, Education and Human Services Committee, Navajo Board of Election and the Navajo Head Start Parent Policy Council.

“None of this would have happened without the support of President Shelly,” said Sharon Singer, director of Navajo Head Start. “He continues to support our children and education.

“He also is committed before his term ends, to ensure that we’re able as a nation, to provide the best services for our children, she added.

Singer explained that benefits of the revamped Navajo Head Start ranged from having a highly qualified staff to a nutrition program promoting health. Working with the CCDF is building capacity for the Navajo Nation, she said.

The national effort for early education services is not new to Navajo.

Sharon Begay-McCabe,

director of the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services, said the CCDF building in Crownpoint where the meeting was held, housed four classrooms and 30 students enrolled in the program.

“The policy of the CCDF states that we are to increase the availability and quality of child care services for income eligible parents,” McCabe said.

Parents who are working, attending job training, or going to school qualify for CCDF services. Additionally, children with special needs or children in protective custody would also qualify.

“The bottom line is we want to have children (here) and help their parents (with child care services),” McCabe said.

Also in attendance at the meeting was Capt. Robert Bialas, regional program manager for Region XI of the Administration for Children and Families.

After living on the Navajo Nation for more than 23 years, 20 of which was spent serving with Indian Health Services, Bialas said he’s supportive of the Navajo people.

“It’s a desire across the Administration for Children and Families for the Office of Head Start and Office of Child Care to begin collaborating together,” Bialas said.

“We want to work with you to ensure this collaboration, this transition, will be successful,” he said.



President Shelly said the time is now for Navajo Head Start and Child Care Development Fund to come together. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Sharon Begay-McCabe, director of Division of Social Services, said the bottom line is enrollment of Navajo students. (Photo by Rick Abasta)



Sharon Singer, director of Navajo Head Start, said the program must recruit 700 students in less than 30 days. (Photo by Rick Abasta)