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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee
receives annual report from Utah Navajo Health System, Inc.

MONTEZUMA CREEK, UT – On Wednesday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee discussed the Utah Navajo Health System, Inc.’s annual report during their regular committee meeting, held at the Montezuma Creek Community Health Center.

The Utah Navajo Health System, Inc. is in its fourteenth year of operation as a 501(c)(3) non-profit health care system serving the “Utah Strip”, which includes the northern population of the Navajo Nation.

“The Navajo health care system is constantly transforming and progressing to meet the unique needs of our people,” said HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels). “On the Navajo Nation, we have former uranium workers, rural patients, and low-income families that require a dependable health care system.”

Currently the UNHS operates four healthcare facilities in Navajo Mountain, Monument Valley, Montezuma Creek, and Blanding, under a P.L.93-638 Title V Self Governance Compact with the federal government.

“UNHS has made monumental progress in meeting our patients needs,” said UNHS CEO Donna Singer. “Today patients have better access to dental care, they can schedule appointments from their iPhones, and we have purchased additional land for our future expansion.”

Singer presented the annual report with staff from the various departments within the UNHS, such as: human resources, methamphetamine & suicide prevention initiative, emergency medical services, clinical pharmacy, patient navigation, and accounting.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) was pleased to hear of UNHS’s quality service and questioned how the methamphetamine & suicide prevention initiative was funded.

“The MSPI is funded by our General Fund, grants, and a little from IHS. We are really trying to utilize our third party resources,” said Singer.

In light of the recent federal sequestration, Delegate Hale suggested that the UNHS board of directors create a resolution to protect the four clinic’s federal funding and grants.
“Programs like MSPI need to be protected. I urge the board of directors to provide the IHS with a list of budget priorities in the form of a resolution,” said Delegate Hale.

The UNHS stressed that they continue to improve patient services by covering tuition costs for employees who choose to attend medical or nursing school, maintaining the patient data navigation system, and working with the state and federal governments to continue contract support costs.

“Our patient navigation system allows UNHS clinics to review patient records and appointments to ensure each patient is receiving the right care regardless of which facility they go to,” said Singer. “Our staff is also working to secure contract support costs that allow us to provide specialty services.”

Following the presentation, HEHSC member Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler (Tó Nanees Dizi) commended UNHS for their success in creating a detailed and progressive facility that maximizes both the patient and provider’s time.

“I am very impressed with the patient navigation system, this demonstrates that UNHS has developed into a successful P.L. 93-638 healthcare system,” said Delegate Butler. “I believe that UNHS is a great representative for hospitals and clinics on the Navajo Nation.”

The HEHSC accepted the report with a vote of 3-0.

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.

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