



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Law and Order Committee receives report
regarding proposed project to assist in suicide prevention**

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee received a report regarding a proposed Suicide Surveillance System Project, a collaborative effort between the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety and the Navajo Nation Epidemiology Center, to gather and analyze data pertaining to suicides on the Navajo Nation, with the goal of creating strategies to decrease the number of suicides among Navajo people.

According to a report provided by epidemiologist, JB Kinlacheeny, the Epidemiology Center proposes a pilot-program that would identify risks and preventative measures related to suicides and suicide attempts using information provided by the NNDPS.

“There have been past attempts to create a suicide surveillance program due to public outcry,” said Kinlacheeny. “So what we have done is we developed a suicide surveillance workgroup in January of last year.”

Although suicide rates have decreased significantly on the Navajo Nation in the last few years, rates remain significantly higher in comparison to the national average, according to Kinlacheeny.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat) spoke in support of the collaboration and encouraged both sides to pursue the project.

“The data that comes from this program can help the Nation understand the needs of Navajo youth, as well as adults, in understanding suicide and preventing it. It would also help create programs that target individuals at risk,” said Delegate Shepherd. “Both entities need to sit down and talk about how they can accomplish this.”

LOC members Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) said the compiled information could then be shared with and benefit other entities on the Navajo Nation.

“Both entities need to work out an organized process to begin data sharing for the project because it will also aid Navajo Nation behavioral health organizations, youth, and adult programs, and the improved data sets enables them to understand suicide,” said Delegate Begaye.

NNDPS director John Billison, cautioned LOC members, pointing out that much of the information obtained by NNDPS is sensitive in nature. However, he also added that he is open to the collaboration, with the understanding that the effort is to promote research to aid in reducing suicide rates on the Navajo Nation.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Delegate Shepherd said the Navajo Nation should invest in its own research projects to provide readily available data to governmental and outside entities who may seek information related to the projects, research, and demographics.

LOC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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