



# NAVAJO DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT FOR SELF RELIANCE



CONTACT

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## For Immediate Release

September 15, 2020

### **“The Navajo Education Incentive (NEI), formerly known as the Navajo School Clothing Program, Requirement Causes Concern”**

**Window Rock, Ariz.** - The Navajo Education Incentive (NEI), formerly known as the Navajo School Clothing Program, is administered by the Navajo Family Assistance Services (NFAS) and is available to eligible Navajo students attending schools within the borders of the Navajo Nation. Navajo students beyond the borders of the Navajo Nation are considered ineligible for the NEI, even if they are residents of the Navajo Nation.

This requirement has led many to express, through social media that the NEI requirement to attend schools within the Navajo Nation is unfair, all Navajo children should be served regardless of where they attend school.

“The DSR agrees, all Navajo children should receive this incentive. It is our goal to offer school incentives to encourage and motivate students to improve their academic performance and improve their self-esteem. Unfortunately, when you do the math, it is impossible for the NEI to serve all,” stated Roxanne Gorman, DSR Department Manager III.

The NFAS NEI operates on a general funded budget, meaning the funds can fluctuate due to an increase or decrease in the Navajo Nation’s general funds’ revenue. This fluctuation can influence the eligibility criteria for the NEI.

NEI reports its School Year (SY) 2020-2021 budget at \$1,132,000, which can serve a maximum of 4,528 students. The Navajo Department of Dine Education reported a total of 33,838 Navajo children attended schools within the Navajo Nation for the 2019-2020 SY.

When the Navajo School Clothing Program began reorganization in 2019, the objectives were to improve selection for students, increase pass-through funds, streamline services, prevent duplication, and remove waste.

Since the Navajo School Clothing Program was established in 1954, the process has always been the same, to purchase pre-selected clothing in bulk at wholesale prices. Head Start, Pre-K, Preschool to Fourth Grade received three items: a pair of shoes, a jacket, and a pair of pants. Students from Fifth Grade to Eighth Grade received only two of the three items. The items were then sorted and packaged for school representatives to retrieve and distribute. The clothing that was rejected or denied by families were put into rented storage. Most of the clothing placed in these storages eventually became waste due to damage or became obsolete.

To improve student selection, while eliminating the need for storage of rejected clothing, the NEI was developed to provide students with the opportunity to choose their own style of clothing and shoes. The NEI is also intended for school supplies or equipment for school, which eventually led to the need for a name change from, the Navajo School Clothing Program, to the *Navajo Education Incentive*.



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“Through the reorganization, waste and the extra expenses from the old process have been put back into direct funding for students,” stated Deannah Neswood-Gishey, NDSS Executive Director.

To streamline services and to prevent duplication of services, the NEI was moved under the DSR to utilize the DSR’s case management software for data entry, automated payments, and to cross-reference.

To prevent duplication of services, the NEI uses the same database as the DSR’s TANF program to cross-reference with the DSR’s School Clothing and School Supply Incentive (SCSSI).

While DSR’s NFAS section can provide 4,528 students with the NEI, the DSR’s TANF program reports that it can potentially serve an additional 3,449 students for the 2020-2021 SY, through their SCSSI.

The DSR TANF benefit group members cannot apply for the NEI, because that would be a duplication of services. Vice versa, NEI recipients will not be eligible to receive the DSR SCSSI, if they later become DSR TANF Customers within the same school year.

“Families with children attending off-reservation schools are encouraged to still apply for NEI to receive an official notification of ineligibility. An official denial notice helps when applying for other state or tribal resources. Also, families who may be potentially eligible may apply for the DSR TANF program. As a DSR TANF Customer, school location is not a requirement for the DSR School Clothing & School Supply Incentive. All DSR TANF benefit group members, who are school-aged, have access to the DSR School Clothing & School Supply Incentive, which is the same amount as the NEI,” stated Madelena Kee, Administrative Services Officer.

To apply for services, applications for the NEI program are available through the Navajo Department for Self Reliance and administered by the DSR’s NFAS section. All DSR offices remain closed to the public, therefore, applications are made available at the DSR office entryways or online.

Applicants completing NEI applications must complete an application checklist and provide copies of their Social Security Card and a copy of their Driver’s License or State Identification. The applicant must also complete and sign a W-9 form. For accounting purposes, not tax purposes, the Navajo Nation Office of the Controller requires a W-9 form from anyone who will receive a check from the Navajo Nation.

For the students listed on the application, a copy of their Navajo Certificate of Indian Blood and Social Security Card is required. A copy of the official verification of enrollment form or letter from the student’s school must also be submitted with the application.



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To electronically submit NEI applications, applicants can fax or email to the following NFAS locations and staff: **CROWNPOINT, NM**, FAX: (505) 786-2238; [evelynlitsuie@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:evelynlitsuie@navajo-nsn.gov), [htmanygoats@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:htmanygoats@navajo-nsn.gov); **SHIPROCK, NM**, FAX: (505) 368-1177, [davinpaul@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:davinpaul@navajo-nsn.gov); **GALLUP, NM**, FAX: (505) 722-8959, [toby.charley@nntanf.org](mailto:toby.charley@nntanf.org); **CHINLE, AZ**, FAX: (928) 674-2351, [sandra.nells@nntanf.org](mailto:sandra.nells@nntanf.org), [loretta.archie@nntanf.org](mailto:loretta.archie@nntanf.org), [ellouise.begay@nntanf.org](mailto:ellouise.begay@nntanf.org), [arlene.yazzie@nntanf.org](mailto:arlene.yazzie@nntanf.org), [cabadonie@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:cabadonie@navajo-nsn.gov); **KAYENTA, AZ**, FAX: (928) 697-5665, [lorraine.benally@nntanf.org](mailto:lorraine.benally@nntanf.org); **TUBA CITY, AZ**, FAX: (928) 2833407, [ruby.lewis@nntanf.org](mailto:ruby.lewis@nntanf.org), [belinda.joe@nntanf.org](mailto:belinda.joe@nntanf.org); **WINDOW ROCK, AZ**, FAX: (928) 810-8557, [harrison.gorman@nntanf.org](mailto:harrison.gorman@nntanf.org), [sylvanna.wilson@nntanf.org](mailto:sylvanna.wilson@nntanf.org); **DILKON, AZ**, FAX: (928) 657-8098, [bsalabye@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:bsalabye@navajo-nsn.gov).

Applications may be submitted electronically, while the original application and forms must be mailed to the Department for Self Reliance, Attention: NFAS – NEI, P.O. Box 2229, Window Rock, AZ 86515. Original applications may also be dropped off at any NFAS office location.

For more information, contact your local DSR office and ask to speak with an NFAS employee or email [info@nntanf.org](mailto:info@nntanf.org).

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