



# NAVAJO HEAD START

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## Navajo Head Start thanks Obama for federal budget increase

*“An increase in funding will allow for NHS to not only serve more families, but also continue to make much needed improvements.” —Sharon H. Singer, Assistant Superintendent*

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** — Navajo Head Start thanks U.S. President Barack Obama for supporting the youngest of our population by increasing the Fiscal Year 2016 budget by \$1.5 billion for the national Head Start programs across the country. This brings the total annual funding amount to \$10.1 billion a year for all its programs.

Sharon H. Singer, assistant superintendent of Navajo Head Start, the largest Head Start Program in the nation, is excited about the increase in the federal government’s budget and said it was exciting news.

“The increase in the federal government’s budget for Head Start programs is exciting news,” said Singer. “Navajo Head Start will be able to continue to expand services to current families enrolled in the program and begin serving new families.”

Singer explained \$1.1 billion of this increase is to allow children to get the much-needed educational services they need.

“The program will be able to extend to a full school year,” she said. “This provides learning opportunities throughout the year.”

Experts say students lose about one month of learning during a three month summer vacation. Programs that have bigger gaps lead to more than one month of information being forgotten by children. These fund increases ensure children will be helped with the expanded school year.

According to the Administration for Children and Families’ (ACF) blog, only one-third of Head Start programs across the nation are running for a full school day the entire school year. The minimum requirement for Head Start programs is 448 hours of programming over an entire year. Students who go to school 180 days a year for six and a half hours a day receive 1,170 hours of instruction annually. By expanding the school day and school year, children will gain more knowledge and will lose less of what they learned over breaks.

The budget for Early Head Start is also increased by \$150 million for the next fiscal year for all programs across the country. The total amount will be \$650 million dollars, which will help provide the program to more families.

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The ACF states that there were more qualified children than the program could support last year. With this increase, more children can be accepted into the program and so they receive the education they need to be prepared for school. These funds will also help to improve the quality of infant and child care, and obtain more Head Start-Child Care partnerships so children have a better opportunity to learn.

As part of the \$1.5 billion increase, there is \$284 million allotted for cost-of-living adjustments. This part of the budget will help offset inflation costs, retain high quality teachers and continue providing different services to families. Due to rising operating costs, this additional income will help to ensure money is not taken from programs to keep up with the cost of living increases.

Singer said there is a lot of potential with the increased funds.

“There is a lot of potential to come from this growth in the federal government’s financial plan,” said Singer. “Through President Obama’s support of Head Start programs, NHS will be able to serve and expand service for more families in need of quality early childhood development services.”

Singer said she has extensive plans and goals for the Navajo Head Start program including developing educational programs to prepare our Nation’s youngest children for the K-12 system.

“An increase in funding will allow for NHS to not only serve more families, but also continue making much needed improvements,” she added. “Navajo Head Start would like to recruit more highly-qualified staff and begin construction development plans for a new Head Start facility in the future.”

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Navajo Head Start is the largest federally-funded grant program in the country. Head Start and Early Head Start services are provided within the geographical area of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia that spans more than 27,000-square-miles across the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Central Administration offices are located in Window Rock, AZ, capital of the Navajo Nation.