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**PRESIDENT SHELLY ANNOUNCES NO FUNDING CUT FOR NAVAJO
HEAD START FOR FISCAL YEAR 2012**

Window Rock, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly announced today the federal government would continue to provide full funding for Navajo Head Start at \$29 million for the next fiscal year.

“The Navajo Nation is finalizing an agreement with the federal government to maintain the current Navajo Head Start funding level at \$29 million for fiscal year 2012,” said President Shelly. “This agreement will ensure services continue to our Navajo children and families. But, the work does not stop there. We must restructure and reorganize the program.”

Although an agreement is being finalized on full funding for Navajo Head Start, the U.S. Office of Head Start still intends to address audit issues regarding chronic under-enrollment, which could affect future funding for Navajo Head Start. According to OHS, a future reduction of funds letter will be issued to the Navajo Nation with appeal rights. Previously, OHS denied the Navajo Nation any right to appeal the prior threatened reduction of funds.

On Aug. 1, OHS Director Yvette Sanchez-Fuentes wrote to President Shelly and determined a 48% funding cut from \$29 million to \$15.3 million for Navajo Head Start.

Following up on this issue, President Shelly met with OHS Director Sanchez-Fuentes on Sept. 26 and expressed his concerns about the lack of government-to-government consultation with the Navajo Nation before the funding cut was determined.

“This proposed reduction was based on an unknown funding formula,” said President Shelly. “The funding offered by OHS was completely inadequate and inappropriate given the size of the Navajo Head Start service population and geographical scale of the Navajo Nation. If the funding cut was put in place, 1/3 of Navajo Head Start employees would have been laid off, services would have been affected, and efforts to rebuild Navajo Head Start would have been cancelled. With full funding, we will move forward and put in place efforts to improve and restructure Navajo Head Start.”

On Oct. 14, President Shelly held a discussion with 500 Navajo Head Start staff about federal funding cuts and long-standing performance issues.

“You work with the program everyday, you know where the issues are, lets work together to fix it,” said President Shelly. “You know we have to work hard and change how we do things so that we maintain services to our children and families served by Navajo Head Start.”

President Shelly also held a one-on-one discussion with parents on Oct. 27 at the Navajo Head Start Policy Council meeting.

“Navajo Head Start will always be here on the Navajo Nation,” said President Shelly. “It will just need to look different, it will need to be rebuilt from the ground up. I want the parent leadership to have input in how it will look.”

In meetings with both staff and parents, President Shelly said all Navajo Head Start deficiencies and non-compliance issues identified by OHS reviewers in Nov. 2010 appeared to be not corrected.

During the week of Sept. 19-22, OHS reviewers held a follow-up visit with Navajo Head Start.

“The Navajo Nation has not received any final report about the outcome of the last follow-up visit in September,” said President Shelly. “To ensure we address this issue in the long-term, Navajo Head Start must change the way it has been providing services. With over 2,800 Head Start Performance Standards to comply with, Navajo Head Start must institute better performance measures and identify new ways to create better efficiencies.”

In his Oct. 7 memorandum to Head Start parents and staff, President Shelly outlined federal Head Start Performance Standards and wrote, “If programs do not correct deficiencies and non-compliance issues, the program grant can be terminated.”

“Our main concern and focus is to ensure that there is very little or no interruption of services to our children and families,” said President Shelly. “The Office of the President and Vice President and Navajo Head Start management will continue to coordinate daily to ensure functions and services are not interrupted. The Office of President and Vice President continues to advise and assist the Navajo Head Start Program with revitalizing and restructuring its program to ensure improved services to Navajo children and families.”

As new information becomes available regarding Navajo Head Start, information will be shared with the staff and parents.

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