



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee seeks meeting with President Russell Begaye regarding Gallup Detox Center

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a follow-up report regarding the Gallup Detox Center, also known as the Na'nizhoozhi Center, Inc., which included data on the success rate of patients and demographics of patients. The report also included a proposed funding request to the Navajo Nation and city of Gallup.

According to the report provided by Dr. Kevin Foley, executive director of NCI, the 60-day traditional residential program has a success rate of approximately 85-percent, and 19-percent of the patients they treat are between the ages of 45-49 years old. Other data information includes treatment demographics such as gender, age, Navajo chapter affiliation and the cost of treatment.

Dr. Foley said there is a substantial need to fund the detox center. The request totals \$1.2 million, which will aid with detox services only, not the 60-day treatment program.

“The model of NCI is a bridge to recovery, and we want to be that bridge between [the Navajo Nation] and the city of Gallup. We also offer a budget proposal today,” said Dr. Foley.

The budget proposal from NCI requests approximately \$600,000 from the Navajo Nation and \$600,00 from the city of Gallup. The funding would be allocated towards operational costs, contractual services, treatment of patients, personnel, and to keep the center open.

In a prior report presented to HEHSC members on March 28, it stated that the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President did not seek to renew the Memorandum of Agreement with the city of Gallup and McKinley County, which expired in Oct. 2015 and resulted in NCI losing funding support from the Navajo Nation. Currently, NCI is operating from emergency funding from the Indian Health Services who allocated an emergency grant to the center in the amount of \$234,000 on Feb. 24.

On March 29, HEHSC vice chair Council Delegate Norman M. Begay (Alamo, Ramah, Tóhajiilee) said he tried to attend a meeting held between the Office of the President and Vice President and the Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services regarding long-term rehabilitation services, but he was told it was a private meeting and was turned away at the door.

Navajo Nation Department of Health acting director Ramona Antone-Nez said she was in attendance at the meeting and it was private, however, President Russell Begay allowed her to participate in the meeting.

“As it was explained and described to me is that the reason it was a closed meeting was because they wanted to make sure no media was in attendance. They wanted to have a real open discussion about the option of treatments that was proposed in the behavioral health investment zone application that was submitted to the state of New Mexico,” said Antone-Nez.

If funding were awarded, RMCHCS would utilize the funds to begin a long-term treatment program for alcohol and drug addicts, in whom a consortium of the Navajo Nation, the Pueblo of Zuni, the city of Gallup, McKinley County, and northwestern New Mexico would collaborate, said Antone-Nez.

EHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ałnáoz’t’í’í) provided a recommendation to hold a meeting between EHSC and OPVP to establish communication regarding long-term solutions for the drug and alcohol problem in Gallup, and to educate the committee regarding the consortium.

“There’s this political maneuvering that’s happening and that’s what I get frustrated with. It’s the Navajo people that we are representing, so it can’t be one decision—it has to be a collective one,” said Delegate Crotty. “We need to bring everyone to the table to discuss this as one Nation.”

Delegate Crotty added that a method or treatment plan needs to be established and should also be discussed to fully clarify all options and services that can be provided, such as detox services, reduction of exposure deaths, and rehabilitation treatment.

EHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said he understood that President Begaye is working toward a long-term treatment program, but NCI’s initial services of detoxing individuals immediately is a very important first step in establishing the road to recovery for alcoholics and addicts.

Delegate Hale said a letter from the committee would be submitted to the Office of the President and Vice President, requesting a meeting between the members of EHSC and President Russell Begaye, along with the NNDOH, city of Gallup, McKinley County, and New Mexico state representatives.

EHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaille/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’ izhi) said the funding request from NCI would be introduced as legislation in hopes to address the immediate needs of detox services.

“This body is ready to run with the funding legislation. If we do that and the President vetoes it, it’s not going to look nice at all. So we need to get a meeting going right away and see how we can all help each other to help our relatives in dire need of detox services,” said Delegate BeGaye.

EHSC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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