



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 27, 2018

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives update on corrective action plan for Fort Defiance Agency Veterans Administration

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Office of the Auditor General and the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration regarding a follow-up review of the implementation of the Fort Defiance Agency Veterans Administration’s Corrective Action Plan, or CAP.

In 2015, the Office of the Auditor General carried out a special review of the Veterans Administration - Fort Defiance Agency, which resulted in five audit findings. In May, the Auditor General issued a follow-up review to determine the status of the implementation of the Corrective Action Plan based on a six-month review period beginning on June 1, 2017 and ending on Nov. 30, 2017.

According to the summary report provided to HEHSC members, the veteran’s administration resolved three of the five deficiencies. The three issues corrected related to the approvals missing supporting documentation, financial assistance requests that were not processed within three days, and financial assistance checks that were not released to veterans in a timely manner. The veteran’s administration has now improved their processes to ensure direct services are provided in an efficient method, according to the report.

The report further states that although the Corrective Action Plan was not fully implemented, the Auditor General rescinded a recommendation to impose sanctions because the veterans service officer has no direct control or decision-making authority over the remaining two deficiencies.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) thanked the program for actively correcting the majority of the audit deficiencies, and recommended that conditions of appropriations be imposed until all issues have been resolved.

“We can take care of this with a COA for the veterans administration for the two deficiencies that still need to be corrected. The committee still expects that the issues be rectified and we look forward to the next follow-up review,” said Delegate Hale.

The two remaining deficiencies relate to missing data in the program's registry used to verify that requests are from Navajo veterans that are enrolled with a chapter within the Fort Defiance Agency, and due to the program's lack of reimbursement claims for \$14,630 for Navajo traditional healing ceremonies.

Delegate Hale said the veteran's administration needs to continue working with traditional healers and practitioners to resolve the issue of payment so there is no disruption of traditional healing services. He stated that the service is invaluable to many Navajo veterans that seek traditional healing because they deal with physical, mental, and spiritual issues due to their military service.

Health, Education, and Human Services Committee members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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