



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Naabik'iyáti' Committee addresses key health and senior care initiatives with the Navajo Department of Health



During the two-day work session, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee heard reports from Navajo Department of Health (DOH) Division of Aging and Long Term Care Support (DALTCS) Health Services Administrator Marlinda Littleman

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. –On Tuesday, the Naabik'iyáti' Committee convened a work session with several Navajo Nation departments including the Navajo Department of Health (DOH) to address ongoing projects, funding allocations, and strategic planning to improve services for elders and enhance health infrastructure across the Navajo Nation.

The committee emphasized the importance of receiving a comprehensive written report from DOH to include detailed financial data, project timelines, and updates on current initiatives, allowing the committee to prioritize resources effectively.

A central topic of discussion was the \$148,681,632.40 earmarked for the Division of Aging and Long Term Care Support (DALTCS) program, which is pending approval. Committee members stressed the need for expedited action to allocate these funds toward critical community health services.

Interim Executive Director of Navajo Department of Health Sherylene Yazzie updated on the Chinle Community Center project, which had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Project payment was finalized in December, and department agents noted that new contracts are currently being processed, which will advance the project to the next phase of development, focusing on rebuilding critical infrastructure.

Yazzie also reported that DOH is developing a fund management plan for an opioid settlement legislation, aiming to assemble a team responsible for managing settlement funds. Once completed, the plan will be presented to the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee for further review and action.

The condition and reopening of senior centers, including the St. Michael's Senior Center, were key concerns raised by Delegate Brenda Jesus during the session. The center, which has remained closed, is vital for providing meals and other essential services to elders. DOH committed to conducting a thorough assessment of the center and providing a cost estimate for its reopening. In the interim, the committee discussed partnering with existing facilities to ensure uninterrupted meal services for elders.

"We need to make sure our elders are taken care of," Jesus said, stressing the urgency of reopening these facilities to provide essential services to the Nation's most vulnerable population.

Both Delegate George Tolth and Delegate Otto Tso raised concerns about break-ins at senior centers and the need for enhanced security. They called for the installation of security cameras and lighting systems at these facilities.

DALTCS Health Services Administrator Marlinda Littleman outlined a phased plan to install security cameras, starting with the Western Agency, to safeguard these critical facilities. However, additional funding is required to extend these security upgrades across all senior centers.

To enhance the efficiency of senior care services, Yazzie added, "DOH is exploring the possibility of regionalizing senior centers by consolidating smaller, underutilized centers into larger, centrally located facilities."

This strategy aims to improve the consistency and quality of services while reducing operational costs.

Yazzie also outlined plans to expand its third-party reimbursement system, currently used for behavioral health services, to other programs, including the Community Health Representatives (CHR) program and DALTCS. This expansion is expected to improve financial sustainability and service provision across the Navajo Nation.

Key action items include the submission of DOH's detailed written report, the assessment and cost estimate for reopening senior centers, and ongoing coordination regarding the opioid settlement funds. Security upgrades and regionalization of senior services will remain top priorities as the department seeks to provide high-quality, cost-effective care.

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