



Alyce Spotted Bear and Water Soboleff Commission
on Native Children
Navajo Regional Hearing
April 21, 2022



Good afternoon Commissioners, fellow panel members and honored guests. My name is Grace M. Boyne, Program Manager II for the Navajo Nation Department of Child Care and Development (DCCD), formerly known as the Child Care & Development Fund Program (CCDF).

The Department of Child Care and Development was established in 1995 to provide affordable child care services for income eligible parents who are working, participating in job training, or educational program, and/or for children who have special needs or are in protective services.

The DCCD service delivery area includes the Chinle, Crownpoint, Fort Defiance, Shiprock, and Tuba City Regions with a total of 17 tribally operated child care centers. During the Navajo Nation Government closure from March 16, 2019 to February 8, 2021; all DCCD operated child care centers remained closed. Although there were no DCCD child care centers in operation, home-based child care providers continued to provide child care services.

DCCD operated child care centers re-opened in phases starting August 2, 2021. There are currently 9 DCCD operated child care centers that are open. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 629 children were enrolled. Currently, there are 104 children enrolled. In addition, DCCD has 50 home-based child care providers serving 125 children.

The child care centers have a positive impact on children in terms of educational accomplishments since the child care centers believe that learning starts in infancy and the centers practice this. Learning is accomplished through cultural learning where everything is taught in Navajo and English is considered a second language. Additionally, the centers believe in literacy where every child is encouraged to read as often as they can. Literacy has long-term consequences. There are a number of “child care” graduates who are pursuing higher education in various universities near Navajo.

In order to efficiently process subsidy payments timely to child care providers and to meet DCCD's annual federal data reporting requirement, it was necessary to invest in a casework management tool for Casework Section. In 2019, DCCD began working with Eaglesun Systems to develop a software called Tribal Assistance System (TAS). The module was developed specific to DCCD's needs. The TAS software will provide benefits and other functions including:

- Streamline process
- Efficient eligibility determination
- Support referral to other services for which children may be potentially eligible.
- Data Management
- Generate Reports
- Automate payments

Barriers:

- A primary obstacle is that we do not have trained personnel in fields such mental health to work with the children/staff to deal with the after-effects of Covid-19.
- Lack personnel with Learning methodologies & curriculum development.

In closing, I offer the following recommendations to improve services to families:

- Increase the Administrative Cap from 15% to 25%
- Notice of Grant Award (NOA)-Allocations should be for the entire Fiscal Year rather than quarterly allotments; which results in higher administrative cost.
- Carryover to go into Reserve Account-To continue to provide services without interruption of services and to expend all funds.