



**Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children  
Navajo Regional Hearing  
April 22, 2022**

Good Morning Commissioners, fellow panel members and honored guests.

My name is Roxanne Gorman. I am the Department Manager for the Navajo Nation's tribal TANF Program, known as the Department for Self Reliance, and have been in this position for 18 years.

The Navajo Nation Department for Self Reliance (DSR), established in 2000, provides assistance and services to an average of 2,600 families, including 6,800 children, each month through seven office located on and near the Navajo Nation.

The DSR Service Delivery Area consists of the Navajo Nation, which is approximately 27,000 square miles and extends into the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, and nineteen (19) federally designated near reservation communities.

Throughout our history, the Navajo people have been proud and resilient. Our ancestors lived by the teaching of T'áá hwó ájit' éego, which promotes taking responsibility for yourself and your family. With the advent of public assistance programs, some Navajo families became dependent on public assistance programs. As a result, the cycle of dependency began and multi-generations have become dependent on public assistance.

In order to turn the curve in the cycle of dependency, the DSR utilizes the traditional teaching of T'áá hwó ájit'eego to move individuals and their families toward self-reliance by promoting living with a purpose, making conscious decisions, exercising personal discipline and taking responsibility for their lives.

In addition, the DSR integrated the Navajo Service Delivery Model (Thinking, Planning, Doing, and Growing), called the Pathway to Self Reliance, into the western case management process.

In order to provide efficient and effective assistance and services to the families we serve, it was necessary that we invest in an automated data base system which met the DSR's case management and reporting needs. As a result, in 2007, DSR selected and began working with Eaglesun Systems to modify their Tribal Assistance System (TAS) software to meet the DSR's needs. In 2009, DSR began utilizing the TAS.

The TAS has been provided numerous benefits including:

- Improved case management services to families and children.
- Provision of assistance and benefits to children and youth (e.g. School Clothing and Supplies Incentives, Subsidized Youth Employment, Educational Incentives (Perfect Attendance, Honor Roll, Academic Improvement and Graduation).
- Ability to generate reliable and timely data reports for submittal to Navajo Nation, State and Federal partners such as Navajo Head Start, First Things First, Office of Dine Youth, Navajo Department of Workforce Development.
- Submittal of complete, accurate and timely data and financial data reports to the DHHS each quarter.
- Eligibility decisions are entered at the local offices and monthly assistance payments are processed every two weeks.
- DSR has had a clean Single Audit for the past ten (10) years.

We all have a shared responsibility to protect children, as they are the future of the Navajo Nation, by providing a nurturing home environment, ensuring they receive a quality education, and have access to resources and opportunities which will improve their chances for future self-reliance.

But there are many barriers which affect the provision of quality and comprehensive services to children including:

- DSR is the only department in the Division of Social Services (DSS) using TAS, which limits cross coordination, collaboration and communication between DSS programs.
- DSR makes referrals for the parents and children to other NN programs, but no response is provided on the status of the assistance and services.
- Lack of data sharing and coordination with other state, tribal, and federal programs to assist eligible families.
- Different case management software that don't communicate, which hinders sharing of data and eligibility on DSR applicants across the Nation.
- Other federal programs lack the flexibility that is provided to state and tribal TANF programs.
- Trained and qualified IT professional staff are not readily available to the Navajo Nation to help programs improve their overall IT infrastructure.
- Lack of coordination between programs to support families and children with appropriate services.

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

- Provide additional funding for programs to use a case management software that can be tailored to automate case management services to improve the application process and the provision of quality case management services and provision of timely benefits and services to families and children.
- A case management software that is used by multiple federal funded programs to improve coordination and case management to families and children.
- Offer flexibility, similar to TANF, for other federal funded programs to keep funds until expended (e.g. CCDF, Navajo Head Start)
- More federal funding for technology infrastructure and expansion of internet services.
- Authorization for TANF funds to be used for the construction of permanent TANF offices due to the lack of facilities on the Navajo Nation.

Thank you.