



NAVAJO DIVISION OF HEALTH / NAVAJO AREA AGENCY ON AGING

ISSUE:

Tribal Consultation Policy between Navajo Nation and Administration on Aging.

BACKGROUND:

The Navajo Nation is a sovereign Nation with a functional government system consisting of a Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branch. The Navajo Nation government has successfully established government to government relationships with respective federal, state, and local governmental agencies through Tribal Consultation Policies.

In the Year 2000, Executive Order 1317 established the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Consultation Policy. The intent of this policy is to assure that Tribal issues and concerns are debated and addressed with viable outcomes. The Department has several consultation and advisory groups such as; CMS Tribal Advisory Group (TTAG), Health Research Advisory Council (HRAC), Center for Disease Control Tribal Consultation Advisory Groups (CDC TCAC), and Substance Abuse Mental Health Service Administration Tribal Technical Advisory Group (SAMHSA-TTAC). These advisory groups are designed to provide necessary consultation with the end goal being to empower and strengthen health related policies and programs for Indian Nations.

However, the Administration on Aging (AOA), as a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services does not have an existing Tribal Consultation Policy. And so there is lacking a formal process to engage consultation with the Navajo Nation on national aging issues facing older Navajos.

IMPACT:

The Navajo Nation (Navajo Area Agency on Aging) has participated in numerous advocacy activities with external organizations at various levels of government. While these are excellent opportunities extended to the Navajo Nation, there remains an inadequacy in voicing one-on-one concerns on aging related issues due to lack of a consultation policy. A Tribal Consultation Policy within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration on Aging would provide greater opportunities for the Navajo Nation to be consulted on issues impacting the older Navajo population. It would also allow the Navajo Nation to have a strong advocacy role in national aging policies and programs so that Navajo Nation elders can access services to improve their health and quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Navajo Nation requests the Administration on Aging to form a Tribal Advisory committee.
- The Navajo Nation requests the Administration on Aging to develop and implement a Tribal Consultation policy with direct advise of the Administration on Aging Tribal Advisory Council.



NAVAJO DIVISION OF HEALTH / NAVAJO AREA AGENCY ON AGING

ISSUE:

Designation of the Navajo Nation as a State Unit on Aging with direct set aside funding from the U.S. Administration on Aging.

BACKGROUND:

The Navajo Area Agency on Aging (NAAA) is established as an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and is a part of the Arizona state unit on aging through the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division on Aging and Adult Services.

As a funding recipient from the Older Americans Act, NAAA receives federal Title III funding through the State of Arizona while federal Title VI funds come directly from the Administration on Aging. The State of Arizona, Department on Aging and Adult Services administers and contracts the Title III planning and allocations from the Older Americans Act to the Navajo Nation for the States of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Because the funds are channeled to NAAA, administrative costs are earmarked and retained by the administering State. This process eventually reduces the amount of funds NAAA receives at the AAA level.

As a tribal organization, the Navajo Nation is a sovereign Nation and has a functional three branch governmental system (Legislative, Executive and Judicial). Therefore, the Navajo Nation government is qualified and capable of administering federal programs and services through direct funding. Further, it has a credible financial accounting system with established oversight management from the legislative and executive branches. Credibility is also reinforced from the fact that the Navajo Nation also manages its own human resource, property, procurement, and records systems.

The Navajo Nation has already received direct funding for several federal programs therefore it has demonstrated capability along with a proven tracking record in administering direct funding for federal programs and services.

IMPACT:

The Navajo Nation will be able to increase services by eliminating indirect costs taken at the State level for administering related services funds. Navajo Nation will set the parameters and quality of services for the older population of the Navajo Nation. It will set its own aging agenda in a manner that is culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of the older Navajo population. Direct funding will provide employment opportunities for the Navajo people in a competitive manner using its own people to provide services to its older Navajo citizens. As a sovereign Navajo Nation the government will centralized its services to the older population.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Navajo Nation requests the U.S. Administration on Aging designate the Navajo Nation as a State Unit on Aging.
- The Navajo Nation recommends the Administration on Aging to provide direct set aside funding directly to the Navajo Nation.



NAVAJO DIVISION OF HEALTH / NAVAJO AREA AGENCY ON AGING

ISSUE:

Request the Administration on Aging to support maintaining Title VI as a distinct Title of the Older Americans Act and to increase funding for this Title as a direct set aside.

BACKGROUND:

The Navajo Area Agency on Aging (NAAA) is established as an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and is a part of the Arizona state unit on aging through the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Department on Aging and Adult Services. As a funding recipient from the Older Americans Act, NAAA receives federal Title III funding through the State of Arizona while federal Title VI funds come directly from the Administration on Aging. The State of Arizona, Department on Aging and Adult Services administers and contracts the Title III planning and allocations from the Older Americans Act (OAA) for the Navajo Nation in the States of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. On the other hand, the Administration on Aging administers and contracts the Title VI planning and allocations from the OAA for the Navajo Nation.

With the intent to reauthorize the Older Americans Act, the Navajo Nation must make known its position to maintain Title VI of the OAA for American Indians and Alaska Natives and to increase funding as this is an underfunded mandate. The Navajo Nation desires not to lose Title VI of the OAA which provides funding for the delivery of supportive services to American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians that are comparable to services that are provided under Title III of the OAA.

IMPACT:

The Navajo Nation will benefit significantly in maintaining Title VI of the Older American Act as a distinct Title that is adequately funded. The Navajo population, along with the rest of the U.S. Native American Indian population, is a rapidly increasing population that has a poverty level as high as 57% with extreme unemployment rates. Life expectancy is 3 to 5 years less than the rest of the country and there are little or no skilled nursing homes, long-term and health care facilities available to meet the needs of the older Navajo population. Housing for most Navajos is substandard and overcrowded with lack of electricity and water in most homes. Only about 20% of the Native American Indian populations receive services under Title VI and less than 1% under Title III (OAA, 2006). These trends would be grossly unacceptable in non-Native American communities. Likewise this should not be the norm on the Navajo Nation.

It must be stressed with urgency that small, rural and isolated Navajo communities (where there is severe lack of public infrastructure) maintaining and increasing funds for Title VI of the Older Americans Act will greatly elevate the quality of services and care for American Indians (Navajos) and Native Alaskans and Hawaiian. Title VI provides much needed and in some case life-sustaining services such as congregate meals, home delivered meals, family caregiver, and other supportive services for Older Navajos. Consequently, maintaining and increasing funds for Title VI of the OAA will result in improved health and quality of life for older Navajos which in turn could lead to the elimination of health care disparities and cost of care for older Native Americans (Navajos).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Navajo Nation strongly requests that Title VI of the Older Americans Act be maintained as a separate and unique Title.
- The Navajo Nation recommends an increasing the level of funding as a direct set aside to Tribes, such as the Navajo Nation, directly to provide adequate and quality services under Title VI of the OAA.