



**THE NAVAJO NATION  
DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**



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PRESIDENT  
JONATHAN NEZ

VICE PRESIDENT  
MYRON LIZER

**Navajo Treatment Center for Children and Their Families  
Testimony for The Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff  
Commission on Native Children  
Twin Arrows Casino & Resort, Leupp, Arizona  
April 21, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman O’Neill and members of the Commission on Native Children. My name is Antoinette Miller, I am the Program Manager for the Navajo Treatment Center for Children and Their Families (NTCCF) program within the Navajo Nation Division of Social Services. On behalf of the Navajo children and families we serve, I am honored to submit my written testimony to the Commission on Native Children. I have worked with the Navajo Nation government in various capacities for the past 30 years.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Commission on Native Children for taking the time to come to our great Navajo Nation and conduct a regional hearing. The Navajo Nation is one of the 22 federally recognized tribes in Arizona. The NTCCF program has extensive experience as well as challenges in the administration of NTCCF program for children.

The NTCCF program provides outpatient counseling, including individual therapy, family therapy, group sessions, traditional services, prevention services, and aftercare services. The NTCCF program is the only Diné-specific behavioral health program on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo traditional cultural teachings are provided by the Traditional Practitioner and Family Therapist. The teachings are provided to youth and families on the fundamental values and the principles of the Diné Way of life. The teaching increase awareness of social issues and how it impacts the lives of children and families. Additionally, live radio forums provide prevention information in the Navajo language to reach people in the remote and rural areas of the Navajo Nation.

In fiscal year 2022, the NTCCF program served 2,122 children and family members on the Navajo Nation, including psychotherapy, child advocacy, and therapeutic treatment services to children for abuse, neglect, and trauma. The NTCCF program also works with children and families with other mental health disorders and at-risk children who are in the Navajo Child Welfare System. Services are provided to children and families in their homes, school setting, or in the office.

The NTCCF program received minimal funding increases over the years. Additionally, the public health pandemic impacted many families on the Navajo Nation and the program is served increased number of children and families who showed grief and loss issues, substance abuse, and other behavioral health issues.



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I would like to talk about the challenges in providing services in the rural areas of the Navajo Nation.

- The Navajo Nation spans over a large land base resulting in clients and families having to travel great distances to obtain mental health services. Therefore, the program cannot provide clinically based services. We must take our services out to our clients' home, school, and community.
- There are six (6) therapists covering the entire Navajo Nation.
- The COVID-19 pandemic forced the NTCCF program to find alternative means of providing services with the use of cell phones and other electronic means to contact clients.
- Many families lack telecommunication services to maintain contact with their therapist and to attend online learning.
- The Program lacks office infrastructure to provide confidential services for clients and families.
- The Program does not receive funding from the Administration for Children and Families. The NTCCF's primary funding sources are very restrictive and do not allow for the expansion of services.
- The Navajo Nation lacks family and community support groups/systems to promote healthy positive lifestyle changes for families.
- Federal Grants are not available to fund Traditional Services because these services are not Evidence Based Practices, thus Federal Grants do not allow for tribal flexibility.
- We are the only rural Mental Health Service Provider on the Navajo Nation that provides services to children in rural communities.
- Although the NTCCF is a small program we can quickly respond and expedite the treatment process for children and families on the Navajo Nation.
- Navajo Tradition and Culture is a critical component and protective factor for our children and families. Traditional and Cultural interventions must be respected and allowed as an acceptable method of services for children and families.
- The Navajo Nation lacks inpatient treatment services for children. Children are currently being placed in off reservation facilities. It is very difficult for family members to participate in the treatment process. This creates a financial burden on families.

## Recommendations:

- The NTCCF program needs funding for additional field offices and staff to meet the increased need. Funding is also needed to support the integration of Western treatment modalities with Diné traditional services for children, youth, and families on the Navajo Nation.
- The NTCCF program requests increased funding to hire additional therapist to cover the remote areas.



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- The program would like to provide support group sessions for clients to allowing learning from their peers. Peer support is an important aspect in the recovery process. The Support groups offer a safe platform where members can share and get the support they need.

Thank you for your time.