Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Head Start Tribal Consultation

November 27, 2018

Hotel Albuquerque Albuquerque, New Mexico

Summary Report

Greeting and Introductions

Tribal leaders addressed ongoing concerns **about teacher salaries**, **facility needs**, **cultural competency and Native language development** during the Office of Head Start (OHS) Consultation in Albuquerque November 27.

The Consultation began at 3:04 p.m. with comments from OHS Regional Program Manager Angie Godfrey. Following the opening prayer by Thomas Moquino, governor of the Santo Domingo Pueblo, Ms. Godfrey introduced OHS Director Deborah Bergeron, Ph.D. During the Consultation, Ms. Godfrey and Dr. Bergeron sought to listen to Tribal leaders, ask clarifying questions and discuss longstanding issues regarding Tribal Head Start. All of the notes and comments would go back to OHS staff, added Dr. Bergeron. Due to the large number of participants, several Tribal leaders agreed to submit additional comments after the Consultation.

Meaningful Consultation with Sovereign Nations

The **Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo** has worked for five to six years on school bus issues. Every year or every other year, the community gets close to acquiring a new school bus before losing the opportunity once again.

In-kind services also remain an issue. Tribal programs or businesses could assist in accomplishing goals for the Head Start, such as helping with events. However, even though pueblo leaders always sign a waiver for in-kind services, those services are not counted or accepted. Ohkay Owingeh also attempted to use a Tribally owned building as an in-kind service but OHS did not allow that option. The Tribe needs new buildings that meet fire regulations and provide updated technology, heating and cooling systems, said Mr. Garcia.

Head Start regulations for teachers cause additional concerns. Head Start now requires teachers to have bachelor's degrees but salaries remain at a minimum-wage level. Teachers who must get certifications should receive appropriate financial compensation, said Mr. Garcia. The community also requested using local agencies for testing, screenings and other medical requirements for Head Start students rather than using the Indian Health Service (IHS).

Ms. Godfrey addressed the nonfederal share issue. There are regulations regarding what is and is not allowable. Tribal leaders should contact program and grant specialists for further clarity, said Ms. Godfrey.

Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, noted a need for additional Head Start classrooms. The Tribe won a competitive grant to start and fund Early Head Start, and both Head Start and Early Head Start are at full enrollment. Further, 12 people are on the waiting list for Early Head Start. The Tribe plans to submit an application for Early Head Start expansion.

The Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Ojibwe, raised these four concerns:

- The coaching requirements in the new performance standards: No additional funding came with this mandated initiative. Tribes therefore must find funding so that this coaching can occur within the Head Start program.
- Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA): Tribes appreciate the COLAs but those funds are not enough. As a result, Tribes lose the ability to compete with other educational institutions and frequently lose teachers to public schools that serve Tribal members but are not Tribally run institutions. Tribes seek to maintain staff so children will have familiar faces in Head Start classrooms.
- Funding for language immersion: Language revitalization remains an important goal for the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe. A local language summit in the Wisconsin/Minnesota/Michigan area is needed to showcase the Tribe's efforts. Such a summit also could motivate local political support. The Tribe also seeks additional funding for language immersion projects. The Kellogg Foundation, the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) and the Department of Education serve as helpful resources but additional funds would assist efforts to start a language immersion nursery.
- **Funding for facilities**: Tribes need additional facilities to educate children safely. The Lac Courte Oreilles community experienced a tornado in summer 2018. Tribal members have requested a storm shelter or gym to protect students during bad weather.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde provided the following testimony:

Cultural competency training for all reviewers is key for Tribal Head Start programs, In light of staff turnover and new hires, OHS must ensure that those reviewing Tribal Head Start programs have cultural competency and knowledge of the Tribes.

The issue of construction/expansion of Head Start facilities. Many Tribal Head Start facilities need repairs and upgrades. Long waiting lists in Head Start could be due to a lack of funding in brick and mortar. Tribes also need to conduct cost-per-child assessments for their communities. Asking Tribes located in different parts of the country to follow one federal guideline standard might be unrealistic. Rural communities often cannot compensate staff properly.

Pueblo of Santa Clara testfied:

Head Start is the most important and successful federal program focusing on the needs of Native youth and families. Tribal Head Start is unique and should continue to receive federal support. Head Start preserves the government-to-government relationship between the Tribes and the United States and helps fulfill the federal government's commitment to work with Tribes. The tribe advocated for mainstream education that is culturally affirming, teaches Native language, demonstrates the greatness and beauty of Tribal history and presents a true picture of Santa Clara's place within the broader American society.

Tribes also request well-resourced schools that do not send a message that somehow Native communities are not as good as the mainstream society. To create a path forward, various funding sources should collaborate to streamline such educational initiatives as Head Start, Early Head Start, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the U.S. Department of Education, Tribally controlled schools and the philanthropic community. Research shows that Head Start is especially important for groups at risk of underperformance in grades K-12, said Mr. Chavarria.

<u>Teacher Qualifications:</u> Any new degree requirement for Head Start teachers should tie directly to increased funding. Without necessary funding to pay teachers a fair wage, programs will remain a revolving door as teachers leave for better-paying positions in the public or BIE school systems. This revolving door will erode classroom quality and disrupt continuity of care. Further, each Head Start needs funding to support a professional development plan and provide initiatives to inspire teachers to achieve performance development goals.

<u>Funding:</u> Inadequate funding appropriations to the federal agencies, including Head Start, present an enormous challenge to Tribal communities that want to prepare for next year's budget. Tribal leaders can work with OHS to identify data and show measurable outcomes that demonstrate to Congress that Head Start works. Tribes also face the threat of plans to sunset Head Start and turn those opportunities over to states. Tribes do not have a relationship with states, said Mr. Chavarria. The relationship is with the federal government through the trust responsibility.

Havasupai Tribe asked about plans for Head Start to partner with BIE to help keep track of the transitioning education of Head Start students up to third grade. Dr. Bergeron enthusiastically supported the concept of working in partnership with BIE. OHS seeks to create a more seamless relationship between Head Start and any public school.

Tribes next raised the issue of competitive funding for Head Start. Tribal communities must look out for the best interest of Native children while fighting for resources added the **Hualapai Tribe.** Guidelines dictate to Tribal Head Start programs, and when adequate funding is unavailable, Tribes must supplement.

Ramah Navajo School Board shared familiar issues with facilities, transportation and child mental health services. The Tribe has about 43 Head Start students spread across four mobile trailers. Teachers must walk outside to other buildings to use the restrooms. Students eat meals in

the classrooms, and staff must roll a milk cart outside to reach each room. This type of campus does not suit the Tribe's high elevation, with freezing night and morning temperatures from October to April. Further, the buildings are 20-30 years old, and the Tribe lacks an indoor gym for inclement weather.

Another 15 children attend a center located 25 miles away to serve the Ramah Navajo students in the northern area of the reservation. The rural location of family homes requires busses to travel 15-40 miles over unpaved roads to reach the students. This leads to high maintenance costs. The program does not receive funds to cover these expenses or to lease government vehicles.

Additionally, under the Head Start standards, mental health Head Start programs must provide a broad spectrum of services, including mental health prevention, early identification of mental health concerns and referrals for treatment of children and families. Only limited-license individuals are available to meet this requirement. The program does not have the funding to hire a licensed professional who could provide more consistent services. The Tribe also wants to provide child-care services to assist parents who work or attend school a great distance away from the Tribe.

Santo Doming Pueblo testified that despite the challenges of underfunding, the Santo Domingo Pueblo continues to keep its essential Head Start program running. OHS must fund the peer mentor mandate. Further, disability services remain slow and inadequate. Other challenges include teacher retention and families that cannot use Head Start due to income requirements.

Karuk Tribe: The only funding that Karuk Tribe has received since the 1990s has been the COLA increases. Head Start classrooms need upgrading, and the Tribe maintains a long waiting list. Head Start should provide some funding while Tribes establish community partnerships to secure the rest of the needed moneys.

The Walatowa Head Start is in its sixth year of implementing a full language immersion program.

- **Monitoring**: Reviewers will not understand the language or know what to expect in a full-language immersion program.
- Language speakers: Fluent language speakers remain a vital classroom need. However, Tribal elders who assist in the classroom might face tax issues. Tribes should be able to provide stipends or find easier ways to invite elders into Head Start classrooms. OHS also should lift the education requirements.
- **Learning environment**: Facilities need renovation to support language learning. Further, mainstream classrooms might not accommodate Tribal programs.
- **Transportation**: Walatowa has already spent \$10,000 this year just on maintenance costs from driving on the dirt roads within Tribal lands.
- **BIE transition**: Now that Head Start has put out the performance standards supporting programs to teach Native language, Tribes recommend greater collaboration with BIE so

Tribal Head Start students have somewhere to go after attending language immersion programs. After two years of rich language learning, students should not move on to BIE schools that teach English, said Ms. Garcia. BIE schools should support Tribal language immersion programs.

Red Lake Nation: Students are not gaining the skills needed to prosper in life. Further, the Tribe had to launch its own language immersion program due to issues with Head Start. The Tribe cannot fully fund the system, and consequently some children do not have access to lessons on traditions, culture and identity. Those tools will help Red Lake Tribal members survive, said Mr. Strong. The U.S. school system inflicted trauma on Native communities, and Tribes feel the effects today. Identity is key to overcoming that trauma, said Mr. Strong.

Red Lake intends to start a school system but the federal government still has a trust responsibility and obligation to provide funds to run such a program. OHS must recognize these funding inequities and bring all the real change-makers to the table. Tribal leaders want to work as partners to address ongoing challenges, said Mr. Strong.

Owens Valley Child Development: Infrastructure costs remain a top concern for the Owens Valley Paiute Shoshone Tribe. The Early Head Start program is at full capacity and serves four Tribes. The program maintains a waiting list of more than 30 children. The Tribe hopes to address the issue of expansion funds as part of its grant submission process. Mr. Denver also encouraged OHS to develop risk indicators that would allow over-income families to access Head Start. Risk indicators for Tribal communities could include such factors as

- High unemployment rates of 50 percent or higher on or around a reservation
- Underachieving school districts

Owens Valley also serves non-Tribal children due to these prevention efforts, said Mr. Denver.

The Tribe faces the familiar challenge of losing Tribal graduates due to low wages. Tribal members get degrees to meet Head Start certifications but Tribes cannot retain those professionals. Further, those professionals ultimately cannot access Head Start for their families due to income requirements.

Addressing some of the comments, Dr. Bergeron noted that Tribal Head Start programs face common issues. That means OHS and Native communities can work as a team to tackle these problems productively. Head Start is an education program but it is not only an education program. Head Start launched in 1965 with a focus on helping low-income children get ready for school. That mission continues today -- but the program does so much more. OHS also focuses on the entire family, said Dr. Bergeron.

Even so, Head Start might not be generational. Head Start takes children up and out of poverty, so when the children of those who attended Head Start cannot enroll due to income requirements, that means the program worked. On the other hand, some who do not qualify financially for

Head Start really should participate on the basis of the model from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). OHS will continue to discuss those nuances.

Regarding the issue of coaches, Dr. Bergeron said Tribal Head Starts can capitalize on current talent by using teachers in this role. Dr. Bergeron also noted that Head Start programs can retain staff if teachers feel valued, believe the work is important and can grow as leaders. These strategies can make a huge difference in staff turnover, added Dr. Bergeron.

OHS supports the idea of a language summit to showcase what works. Federal staff also continue to work to find reviewers who have Tribal experience and cultural competency. Tribal Head Start leaders can enhance the assessment process by using pre-monitoring conference calls as an opportunity to share unique program details with reviewers. The purpose of monitoring is to ensure programs educate children and spend Head Start funds properly, said Dr. Bergeron.

OHS also will continue to discuss transition with BIE. As OHS and BIE develops a stronger working relationship, Dr. Bergeron encouraged Tribal leaders to connect their Head Start programs with local partners.

Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

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