

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Region 9 Tribal Consultation**



**OFFICE OF HEAD START
SUMMARY REPORT**

from

June 18-20, 2019

William Jessup University
Rocklin, California

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) held the Region 9 Tribal Consultation at William Jessup University in Rocklin, California, on June 18-20, 2019. The first day served as a “Resource Day,” affording participants an opportunity to learn about HHS and hear about HHS ReImagine and Secretary Alex Azar’s priorities. Schuyler Hall, Region 9 Office of the Director, led this informative session. The day’s agenda also included the Human Trafficking in Indian Country/Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women session, which provided an update on the work that HHS is doing to address human trafficking in Indian Country as well as missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Jeannie Hovland, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Affairs, and Emily Hughes, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region 9, served as presenters.

The second and third days of the meeting allowed Tribal leaders to provide input and feedback to HHS and regional leadership on matters of concern; and various presentations from national and regional officials were provided.

June 19, 2019

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ed Heidig, Regional Director, Region 9, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, HHS, opened the meeting by welcoming the group. Having served a full year in his current position, Mr. Heidig commented on his experience. He made specific note of his attendance at a Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC) meeting held on Salt River; and the impact that seeing and hearing about the effects of methamphetamine had on him. He encouraged Tribal members to consider joining the STAC, noting an extension in the application deadline through July 2019. Before ending his remarks, Mr. Heidig assured the group that items discussed would be noted and tracked for follow-up.

After inviting a Tribal elder to provide an opening prayer and hearing participants’ self-introductions, Mr. Heidig asked Fran Majestic, Office of Head Start, Director of Program Operations, to begin the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Consultation Session.

Administration for Children and Families Consultation

Office of Head Start Annual Consultation

Fran Majestic, Director of Program Operations, Office of Head Start (OHS)

Todd Lertjuntharangool, Regional Program Manager, OHS

Ms. Majestic welcomed the Tribal participants and provided overview information regarding the Office of Head Start (OHS). She noted that OHS provides approximately 1700 grants to local communities, including 154 to American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities across 26 states—representing nearly \$300 million in grant funding this year for AI/AN programs. She reminded the group that several years ago the OHS re-wrote its Head Start (HS) performance standards, mentioning that there are some eligibility differences for AI/ANs. She also encouraged existing programs to apply for one-time needs when emergencies arise. Other

highlights from Ms. Majestic's presentation included the following: In 2020, a report will be given to Congress on the state of facilities in Indian Country; OHS received \$55 million in disaster funding for 2019 and the guidance for the funds is being drafted; Early Head Start (EHS) Expansion funding is expected for next year; and discussions are underway regarding streamlining OHS grants and pooling EHS and HS funding in Indian Country to reduce cost, reporting, and administrative burdens. Before ending her presentation, Ms. Majestic noted that an OHS consultation would be held the following week in coordination with the National Indian Head Start conference; and she directed Tribal participants to the OHS website for information regarding OHS Director Deborah Bergeron's priorities for the agency.

Before opening the floor for comments, Todd Lertjuntharangool, Regional Program Manager, OHS, Region 9 AIAN, thanked the attendees for their participation and said he looked forward to hearing their testimonies.

Open Tribal Leader Comments and Questions

During this session, Ms. Majestic asked Tribal participants to give feedback and let her know what they need. A recap of those responses is provided below. Comments are reflected by a "C" and Responses are reflected by an "R" throughout this document.

C: (Lana McCovey) Changes in teacher education requirements have resulted in difficulties in recruiting teachers and maintaining language immersion programs. Many facilities have problems and/or need to be replaced.

R: (Fran Majestic) We can talk, as there are waivers that can be requested for teachers to get credentials and there is an online program through Bay Mills that is free for Tribal members. I don't recall seeing an application for facilities, so I'd encourage you to put that application in the system.

C: (Velasquez Sneez) The San Carlos Apache Tribe requested funds for a centralized school and after things got started the Tribe was informed that funds were not available. You should visit and see the programs to have a better understanding of our funding requests. We need a Head Start building, a Head Start bus; the government has a trust responsibility to us that includes education.

C: (Serrell Smoke) Our Head Start program is growing and we are running out of space. One of our buildings had a sanitation issue with the water; the problem is not fully resolved. We support combining EHS and HS grants to remove unnecessary barriers.

R: (Fran Majestic) I'd encourage you to apply for emergency funds through a supplemental application.

C: (Len George) Transportation is an issue, as well as lack of high-speed internet. We are growing out of our building. We are having difficulty finding qualified individuals to take over our Head Start; we struggle to get people certified.

R: (Fran Majestic) Head Start is generally seen as something positive and Congress has been funding it. We've been able to fund infrastructure needs through one-time funding awards that have been significant.

C: (Deannah Neswood-Gishey) I'd like to share how we collaborated in our Tribe to get teachers certified. We collaborated with Head Start and the Child Care Development Fund and with TANF [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families] recipients; we had them get a certificate and they completed sessions and then TANF customers could be employees, so there is a different way to collaborate to get qualified teachers to work with your Head Start programs.

C: (Carletta Tilousi) Havasupai requests improved communication and more understanding in terms of deadlines; we have to transport everything by helicopter to build a facility at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. We are trying to bring more behavioral assistance/services to our kids in Head Start. We still have challenges with income requirements; living costs are expensive and many families don't qualify for local Head Starts, so we are trying to come up with creative ways to support them.

C: (Velasquez Sneazy) Please send any information you have on available funding to David Reid. If I had known Head Start was going to be a topic, I would have recommended to my council to send an appropriate person.

R: (Fran Majestic) We try hard to communicate and we acknowledge that sometimes it's difficult; I welcome written comments or calls on your issues.

C: (Mark LeBeau) CRIHB [California Rural Indian Health Board] has a 9-page document to submit that details EHS and HS concerns to ACF. A formal, written response to the document is requested. Among the items we highlight include: teacher qualification waivers and the need to engage cultural teachers in Head Start and allow Tribes to determine their suitability; HS/EHS slot conversion, federal monitoring, staff qualifications, Tribal Head Start facilities, OHS training materials, OHS Tribal consultation process, and the quality improvement fund. [Mr. LeBeau shared comments and recommendations on each item of concern and indicated that the 9-page document would be submitted for the official record.] Thanks for durational funding; we are getting ready to get a new Head Start bus that is critically important to us. We are concerned about the use of CLASS [Classroom Assessment Scoring System] as a measurement tool for those that go into the designation renewal process. We want to ensure that Tribal programs don't lose funding. CLASS didn't consider Native children, so the validity is suspect regarding Tribal programs; it does not include culture; it's biased, as auditors are not trained to work with Tribal programs. The process to convert a HS slot to EHS can take more than a year to complete. OHS should not require AI/AN programs to follow the slot conversion process based on the act saying we can allocate funds between the two programs. [Ms. Majestic agreed that they can do better in this area and said she and Mr. Lertjuntharangool will be working to get guidance out on this issue.] We need to ensure the qualifications of federal reviewers; we are concerned about the lack of knowledge of onsite teams and their lack of cultural understanding regarding Tribal governments. Cultural competency training is needed. It is hard to recruit qualified staff; and Tribal Head Start programs can't compete with other schools for employees. Funding has not increased for programs to pay competitively for staff with required degrees and experience.

Please grant waivers for staff that do not meet degree requirements until funding levels are increased; and allow programs to renegotiate “costs per child” numbers. Tribes struggle to keep up with costs for facilities; 36 percent of facilities have infrastructure concerns. You should create opportunities for grantees to apply for funding for facilities; provide separate space for facility topics and help with preparing applications for facility funding.

R: (Fran Majestic) We will provide responses in writing to your document.

C: (Timothy Nuvangyaoma) With the rewrite of the Head Start policy, there were a lot of compliance concerns. When you talk about streamlining some procedures, I want to take that information home and connect my people to your office. You mentioned disaster relief funding. We have strong winds in my area. Should we have a need, what is the timeline for submitting or can we have something on hand to submit and follow-up with a phone call if needed? I’m going to take information home that I’m hearing and I’m going to suggest that others do the same. We got funds for a new modular unit, so we are happy to move forward with that. We must be persistent in pursuing opportunities.

R: (Todd Lertjuntharangool) I have been to some of the communities spoken about today. I appreciate the specificity in the 9-page report. Recently, we had a notice for proposed rulemaking, and we need to ensure that Tribes provide comments. I’ve been taking my notes to reach out to have some direct conversations, so thanks for sharing your challenges. I’m glad that Head Start is working, but I acknowledge that there is more work to be done.

C: (Carol Larson) We’ve had difficulty hiring qualified teachers. ACF should look at grant waivers or different mechanisms to keep our teachers and entice former teachers to come back to the education field.

C: (Lawrence Jackson) Our nation is very small, and our Tribal children attend public school from K – 12. We don’t have a Head Start program, but we run a Montessori program that is fully funded by the nation. Our parents are reluctant to put kids in public Head Start, so if they don’t attend the Montessori school, they typically don’t get any “Head Start” at all. Sometimes the communication or the idea of consideration of the Tribal kids and their unique needs and cultural needs falls on deaf ears in the public system.

C: (Carletta Tilousi) We may need to educate the feds on issues faced by Tribes and maybe set up a working group to address some of these issues, e.g., having Tribes work with you. Federal reviewers thought the baskets kids were laying in were not appropriate, but they had to be told this is historical. A lot of us speak our language and some things have to be interpreted. For us to understand policies and implement them, we have to understand them.