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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: Monday, September 22, 2025

**DIVISION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES MOVES FORWARD WITH COMPETITIVE SALARIES**

The Navajo Division for Children and Family Services (DCFS) took a momentous step forward in providing appropriate compensation for its federally funded employees. President Buu Nygren signed a memorandum to the Division of Human Resources supporting the DCFS request for a salary scale wage increase.

This has been a priority for DCFS Executive Director Thomas Cody since he started at the Division. Cody told DCFS employees that he committed to helping them increase salaries to be equitable and competitive.

He said that President Nygren's platform included increasing salary when he was campaigning and that the Navajo Nation Personnel Policy allows for the increase.

"We worked on this for over two years," Cody said.

Cody thanked President Nygren, Reycita Toddy of the Division of Human Resources, Cordell Shorty of the Office of Management and Budget, Controller Sean McCabe, and the Health, Education and Human Services Committee for their assistance and support.

"You're going to have the same wages as the federal people get to have every year," President Nygren said. "I want to make sure we do that for all our federal programs and all our Navajo Nation federal employees."

Most of the employees under the Division are paid with external funds.

Toddy said that Cody talked to her nearly every day about implementing the salary adjustment. "I know it took a long time, but we were going through a compensation study for the entire Navajo Nation which includes the executive and legislative branches. Because that also included the Division for Children and Family Services, we couldn't just say we're going to approve it now without considering and doing some comparison of the salaries and the work that each of the programs do," Toddy said.

Toddy said they also wanted to make sure the Navajo Nation would be able to sustain the funding beyond the current fiscal year. They received assurance from Office of the Controller and the Office of Management and Budget on the funding issues, she said.

Cody said that the Division wants to bring in additional people to help fulfill its goals of providing services to the Navajo people. He noted that some of the Division's child care centers are not fully staffed and some are closed. "With the new salary rate, we think we can do that, bring more people back into the Division," he said. He said that the Division will be conducting recruitment drives.

Deannah Neswood-Gishey, Department Manager for the Department of Child Care and Development, said that there are 16 child care centers on the Navajo Nation but only 11 are open. “We have beautiful facilities that we cannot open because we don’t have livable wages,” she said.

Other DCFS program managers affirmed the need for increasing salaries to recruit and retain employees.

“Many social workers get paid at a higher level when they go to the state side, so being able to have them stay with the Nation and provide those direct services to our people is extremely needed,” said Crescentia Tso, Department of Family Services Manager.

Some positions under Department of Self Reliance (DSR) are minimum wage and the action will help to fill those positions, said Antoinette Miller, DSR Manager.

She added that many staff of the DCFS have master’s degrees and they deserve to get paid a competitive rate.

Individuals interested in applying for positions within DCFS may visit the Navajo Department of Personnel Management for the latest vacancies at www.dpm.navajo-nsn.gov.

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