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DINÉ ACTION PLAN MOVES FORWARD WITH DATA GATHERING

The Diné Action Plan (DAP) Advisory Group and Task Forces held their quarterly gathering on September 25-27 at Twin Arrows Navajo Casino and Resort.

The Advisory Group and Task Forces work on implementing the DAP, which provides a road map to address the Navajo Nation's biggest challenges, known as nayéé or modern-day monsters, including suicide, substance use disorder, violence, and missing and murdered Diné relatives. The DAP utilizes the strengths of the Navajo people by drawing upon cultural teachings and methods to defeat the nayéé.



Del Yazzie and David Foley, Epidemiologists with the Navajo Epidemiology Center (NEC), are a part of the DAP Data Workgroup. During the gathering, Yazzie demonstrated the NEC's online dashboard, which reports data from all clinics on the Navajo Nation on hospitalization and emergency room rates. The data dashboard contains information related to suicide, substance abuse and violence and can be filtered by disease type and Navajo Nation Agency.

The data can be used to make decisions regarding allocation of resources and evaluation of existing efforts. This is an exciting development as the Diné Action Plan has sought to update baseline data to evaluate its efforts in defeating the four monsters.

The NEC, established in 2005, conducts disease surveillance, collects and analyzes data, and evaluates and researches for the Navajo Nation. The NEC is unique because it is the only tribal epidemiology center that works with only one tribe. The NEC leads the DAP Data Workgroup, which has been meeting every two weeks since July. The workgroup has established data hub infrastructure through cloud-based computing, strengthened new and existing partnerships, and created data sharing agreements and tools.

“Some of the DAP data work we've been doing has allowed us to meet other people, other partners, other programs, and I'm very grateful for that because public health requires partnerships,” Yazzie said.

Foley unveiled new mortality data the NEC has obtained from the New Mexico Vital Records and Health Statistics on Navajos living in the state of New Mexico on the Navajo Nation and border towns for 2018 through 2024. Foley presented data related to the DAP monsters including assault, suicide, alcohol abuse, alcoholic liver diseases, and opioid abuse. One interesting point was that there was a slight decrease in suicide deaths from the 2018-2020 time period compared to the 2021-2024 time period. The percentage is still larger than the national rate and comparable to the national American Indian/Alaskan Native rate.



The DAP Data Workgroup is working on also obtaining data from the states of Arizona and Utah, Yazzie added. The NEC also has a DAP webpage under its Projects and Reports page that includes reports it delivers to the DAP.



Thomas Cody, Executive Director for the Navajo Division for Children and Family Services, addressed the DAP gathering emphasizing the need to get to the root cause of the issues in order to create change for the Navajo Nation.

“We need to turn the tide for our children,” he said.

Cody thanked the Navajo Nation leadership who participate and support the DAP.





The DAP's evaluator, Dr. Jami Bartgis from One Fire Associates, presented a report reviewing the progress and highlights from the last three months. The report emphasized that the DAP is not only about slaying the monsters but is about working together to do so.



One accomplishment noted by the evaluator includes the utilization of Diné way of life foundation and teachings through the gathering of hataalii, cultural outreach events, and ceremonies for healing, blessings and protection. Other accomplishments include the efforts by the data workgroup, consistent DAP Advisory Group and Task Force meetings, and policy and organization change such as the Tribal Community Response Plan, universal screenings for early intervention, and the Operation: Diné School Safety platform.

During the DAP fall gathering, participants discussed how they can coordinate their work and what actions they can take immediately to help people in need.





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The Victim Advocacy Summit on Saturday gave participants the chance to share their personal stories and remember and honor loved ones who were affected by issues such as violence and/or substance use. One mother was seeking help with her children after losing their father. Others sought resources for advocating for children, elders and other community members. Participants worked to identify resources in the Navajo Nation agencies and chapters.



The next DAP meeting will take place December 17-18 in Farmington, N.M.

The DAP Advisory Group is led by Chair Michael Henderson, Executive Director of the Division of Public Safety, and Co-Chair Sonlatsa Jim, Deputy Director of the Division for Children and Family Services. The Advisory Group is comprised of 19 representatives from Navajo Nation branches, divisions and programs. The Division for Children and Family Services has led the effort to implement the DAP for the Navajo Nation over the past two and half years.

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