

Food Stamps & Equality Care Program

By, Donovan Antelope

The NANDSS program also has a Department of Family Services branch in their new building. The state has two workers there to serve that branch, Ursula Aragon and Becky Warren. Ursula is the Benefits Specialist and has worked with family services for nine years and Becky is a Benefits Specialist who has worked for state for eight years.

Community members who are eligible for food stamps are generally low income families. All applicants that apply for help through family services must provide verification of all forms of income such as pay stubs, statements regarding if they receive social security or veterans disability, ECT. The amount of food stamp benefit they receive depends on how much income is coming into the household and how many household members there are. The amount of food stamps issued per household covers only part of the households total food expenses. The food stamps program is designed only to help families pay for their food expenses, not totally cover the entire monthly amount.

The Medicaid Program is administered by Wyoming Department of Health and jointly funded by Federal and state government. The Family Equality Care Program and Wyoming Kid Care Programs are the health care programs offered by the state to assist low income families who are either un-insured or under-insured. These programs help the families pay for most medical procedures and medicines. The Indian Health Service and other local health providers do require people to apply for these programs and it is possible for different members of a household to be able to be on different programs, even if they do live under the same roof.

Right now, they have a caseload of over 400 clients and they work alongside with TANF. Ursula and Becky handle all matters of Equality Care and Food Stamps and help community members apply for these services. TANF and other programs in NANDSS refer their clients to the Food Stamps and Medicaid program if they need these services. By working in conjunction with the other programs in NANDSS, Becky and Ursula try to go by NANDSS goal of helping tribal members become self-sufficient. If any of their clients don't follow the guidelines set forth by the state, then those tribal members' benefits are sanctioned. This means for a certain amount of time, their benefits become suspended until the clients become in compliance again.

Becky and Ursula both provide the same services as the Family Services offices in Lander and Riverton and their location is very convenient for tribal members who cannot find transportation into either town. Also, TANF and Child Care clients or anyone seeking social service assistance can apply for food stamps and Medicare all in one location without having to drive to either Riverton or Lander.

Since it is part of the state's Department of Family Services, NANDSS's food stamp and Equality Care office doesn't provide services to tribal members only, but to

everyone on the reservation that meet the financial guidelines for these services, tribal and non tribal member alike.