



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sequestration Impacts Tlingit & Haida Head Start

The September 2013 start date for all Tlingit & Haida Head Start Classrooms and Douglas Home Based Options will be delayed due to budget cuts of 5.27% caused by the automatic budget cuts from the sequestration that went into effect March 1, 2013. On April 16, 2013, the Tlingit & Haida Head Start Policy Council held a special meeting to consider a late start date for all Head Start programs operated by Tlingit & Haida and agreed unanimously to approve management's recommendation to start the 2013 school year three weeks late. The first day of class will be September 23, 2013 instead of September 3, 2013.

The delayed start date will also impact the return to work for all Tlingit & Haida Head Start employees by a total of three weeks. This was a difficult decision to make, but it was determined to be the best option. Other options included possibly closing a center, reducing the number of children and families served, or reducing hours worked per week by all employees. All employees are impacted by the cuts including administrative staff who will be taking leave without pay over the summer months and between now and the end of December.

Tlingit & Haida Head Start Director Albert Rinehart reports that Kids' Corp, Inc. in Anchorage has closed a center as a result of the budget cuts and programs around the nation are cutting staff positions, eliminating transportation, or taking other measures to reduce costs.

The impact on families will be substantial due to the lack of important services provided by Tlingit & Haida Head Start. Most of the families served by Head Start meet the income guidelines of being at or below the poverty level; and for many children and families Head Start provides access to resources beyond the educational benefit of being in a learning environment with their three and four year old peers. All children entering the program

are screened by health and dental professionals and they receive developmental screening to determine how they are developing socially, emotionally and cognitively. These services are important in helping the children and families by preparing them for the next steps of entering public school ready to learn. How each child is doing in all phases of their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical wellbeing, and how well they relate to their overall environment are critical in future success. Tlingit & Haida Head Start also stresses the importance of good nutrition and provides healthy meals that, for many, might be their only meals of the day. Perhaps most importantly, Tlingit & Haida Head Start encourages parent involvement in the education of their children.

Tlingit & Haida Head Start programs recognize that some tough decisions were made, but those impacting our needy children and families are the hardest to make. All parents, families, and friends of Tlingit & Haida Head Start are encouraged to contact their representatives at the state and national levels to share their thoughts about how these funding cuts are impacting their families.

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