

CONNECTIONS

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Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' employees closer together

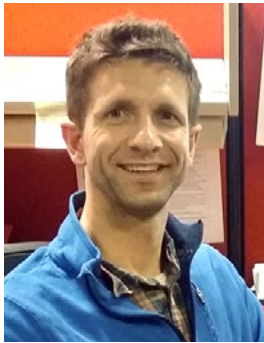
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

By Melissa Lindell

Child Abuse happens every day in Nebraska. Last year, Nebraskans saw roughly 3,500 substantiated victims of child abuse and neglect. That is a staggering number, but members of #TeamDHHS are working to help change that.

Since April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, we wanted to talk to those on the front lines of the fight against child abuse to give us their perspective.

By talking to them, you hear the passion they have for their jobs and just how much they care for the kids they work to protect.



Tyler Switalski

“It is hard for me not to fret over these kids,” **Tyler Switalski**, Child/Family Services Specialist, said. “My first priority in a case is always to make sure the child is going to be safe. When I look at the larger picture and see that the child and family

will make progress, nothing feels better.”

Tyler works in the Northern Service Area. His investigations take him across several counties each day.

This is challenging work. It requires these Child and Family Services Specialists and

Hotline workers to separate themselves from what they do every day. Something that can be very hard, at first.

“My first case I went home and thought about the child and family. What more could I do to help them? It’s very hard not to take your work home,” Tyler said.



Melissa Bennett

“Everyone has choices; I can only do what I can and give them the tools to make good choices,” **Melissa Bennett** said. Melissa is a CFS Specialist in the Western Service Area. Despite the nature of the job, she says it can be very fulfilling.

“I remember a youth who came into foster care due to his mother’s drug use. She relapsed but readmitted herself and completed the program successfully. She was able to be reunited with her son. Today, she still keeps in contact with her supports and therapist. It’s wonderful to see,” Melissa said.

Drugs, alcohol, and mental illness can all play a part in many child abuse cases. Poverty may be another factor. It is possible that families living in poverty experience stress, which in turn, leads to a greater

chance of child abuse or neglect. Every day our team sees families on some of their worst days, but the best part is seeing them on their best days, too.

“When I get to see these families make progress, follow their protocol, go to therapy, and get their kids back that makes my heart full. This is why I do what I do. I have always wanted to help people and this is a way to do just that,” Melissa said.

“I get Christmas cards from a few of the families that I’ve worked with, keeping me updated on their lives after they’ve worked through the issues that caused me to be involved in their lives in the first place. It makes me feel good to know that they have made progress and are doing well as a family,” Tyler said.

Phyllis Wachtler has worked for the State of Nebraska for 45 years. Some of those years were spent in the field as a CFS Specialist, but now she takes calls for the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

“It is a challenging thing. It can be hard to get the information we need. Some people can call in and be very angry, too. It just depends on the person,” Phyllis said. “I don’t usually get to know what happens after that initial phone call comes in on the hotline, unless someone tells me, or it happens to be a news story. I do have one woman who I helped when I was in the field and she will still call me occasionally just to catch up and let me know how she is doing. I love that.”



Phyllis Wachtler

Child abuse is not a new issue. It has been happening for years. The triggers have changed over time, but at the basic level, they remain the same: drugs, alcohol, poverty, and mental illness.

“Drugs are destroying families. When I first started, there used to be more alcohol-related issues, but now its drugs, especially meth,” Phyllis said.

These frontline team members all have one thing in common: they want to help people. “I originally wanted to be a counselor and found this career path on the way,” Melissa said. “I love my job. It makes me so happy to be a part of helping these families heal. If I can get the families that I work with to understand the safety piece of it, then I’m doing something right.”

Adult & Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline

1-800-652-1999

Stay Connected on



make the connection . . .

DHHS Public Website: www.dhhs.ne.gov
DHHS Employee Website: <http://dhhsemployees/>
DHHS Helpline: 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via email at dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov

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Nebraska is 150! Celebrate by serving others

By *ServeNebraska*

As part of Nebraska's sesqui-centennial celebration and National Volunteer Month you can help make an impact on our great state through Nebraska Impact.

Nebraska was built on the foundation of neighbor-helping-neighbor -- a tradition that remains strong today.

A recent study showed Nebraska ranks 6th in the nation for volunteerism.

While impressive, we believe our ranking is much higher. The study also showed:

- A stunning 71 percent of Nebraskans engage in informal volunteering each year (assisting a neighbor in need or lending a hand in a child's classroom).
- Nebraska volunteers have a \$1.3 billion economic impact on the state annually.

NebraskaImpact.com was launched by Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, First Lady Susanne Shore and the Nebraska 150 Celebration with the goal of connecting Nebraskans with one another, building strong neighborhoods and helping people find new opportunities to grow. Designed to support volunteer needs in 2017 and for years to come, the new website empowers volunteers,



allowing them to connect with organizations and one another while tracking their progress.

How does the website work?

Organizations that use volunteers (nonprofits, schools, churches, food banks, etc.) can:

- Create an account
- Advertise volunteer needs and events
- **Volunteers can:**
- Create an account
- Search for service opportunities

- Follow the organizations and positions that interest them most and get real-time updates
- Track volunteer time
- Earn virtual badges for hours of service, post them on social media pages and create a chain reaction of good will across the state

ServeNebraska Week is Coming Soon! April 23 - 29, 2017

This statewide week of volunteerism is geared toward meeting the goals of the NebraskaImpact initiative. Consider hosting an event or registering to volunteer!

Registration forms will be available soon at NebraskaImpact.com.





Courtney Phillips, CEO

Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

new ways to continue to improve the way we do business. Your dedication to those we serve is one of the things that I admire most. From the staff at the YRTC-Kearney who drove to the YRTC-Geneva to help out when we had an escape there, to field offices in different cities who help by taking phone calls when we face technical problems, your teamwork does not go unnoticed.

After I met with many of you last summer, we've been working to improve internal communications to make sure everyone gets the information they need. Something that many of you asked about was a suggestion box.

You'll soon see a new button on the intranet homepage that will take you to the DHHS Suggestion Box. This is an idea we're exploring, and if it's useful and successful for you, we'll keep it going.

This is an opportunity for you all to share questions, thoughts, ideas, opportunities for improvement, process improvement project ideas, or anything else you think the DHHS leadership needs to know. You do have the option to keep your suggestion anonymous –

I would like to point out, though, that if you don't include your name we won't have any way to respond to you. If you do choose to include your name, we will keep it confidential.

We've faced some challenges in my first two years with DHHS, but I am very proud of overall improvements we have made in the culture here. It's good to see that people truly enjoy what they do, and where they are. I hope you all feel valued for the work you provide. What we do each day is not always easy, but it is important.

I want to encourage y'all to keep up the feeling of a positive culture. Pay it forward by encouraging your coworkers, and appreciating the things they do each day. A little positivity goes a long way in making someone's day brighter.

I'm also pleased to note that we finally have a full team, as Dr. Tom Williams was recently confirmed by the Legislature as our Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health. Congrats, Tom!

Thank you all, again, for your efforts to make sure that all of #TeamDHHS is White Belt Certified. Now our Senior

Leadership team is taking the next step to become Yellow Belt Certified. We are excited to continue our training and make these important process improvements.

2017 looks to be a busy year. The Legislature is in full swing, we're working on updating our Business Plan, and I'll be hitting the road again this summer. I'm personally making headway on my dissertation and expect to have it finished this year. But please, still hold me accountable. I appreciate all of the emails you've sent, checking in on my progress.

Thank you for all that you do every day to help people live better lives.

Greetings #TeamDHHS!

It's hard to believe that I've been a member of #TeamDHHS for two years now! In my time here I've had the privilege to experience a lot of things with y'all. I'm still learning, but I'm proud to be a part of this team that works hard to help people live better lives.

As I look back on these past two years, the things that stand out most to me are the times I've spent one-on-one with you, in our offices and facilities across the state. I've enjoyed meeting each one of you, learning more about you, and what you do to make this great agency work. You have ideas for

In Gratitude



The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services' mission: **Helping people live better lives.**

Here are some letters & notes DHHS employees have received thanking us for the work we do every day to help people live better lives.

Thank you **Peggy Calvin** (HR Business Partner)!

I am excited to begin this new adventure with DHHS! I truly was pleased to have the opportunity to meet you during the Team Up sessions! Thank you for making the trip out west and to make both of us feel as if we are a part of the "team" from day 1! Your Team Up program is truly a beneficial aspect to new employees. I appreciate the time involved to create this program and for **Jana Leistriz** in her presentation. It made the unknown venture into DHHS a little less scary!

Hope our paths cross often!

Connie Kittell

Director **Calder Lynch**,

Just wanted to send a quick note to say thank you for promptness in working with us on LB578/ GEMT (Ground Emergency Medical Transportation). The recent changes within CMS in regards to our proposed bill was unforeseen and could have struck a horrible blow to our yearlong campaign for Medicaid relief for first responders. We fully recognize that your staff could have held the new information until the last minute and not provided us time to find alternative solutions. I wanted to reach out and say how much I appreciate the genuine efforts to work with us for a reasonable solution. That fact that you would so promptly meet with us again on such short notice is commendable anytime but especially during the last few days of the committee hearings. I will certainly make it known within my circles of influence that you and your staff should be commended for your professionalism and cooperation.

Again, thank you.

Micheal Despain
Fire Chief, Lincoln Fire & Rescue Department

MLTC team members:

Just wanted to let you know that you have some of the nicest and most helpful people that work for you. I have always been greeted by a smile and have always been treated with kindness and respect.

It's hard to ask for help when you have worked your whole life and then get sick but everyone there treated me so well. Even the young men held the doors for you.

When I call Lincoln or Omaha on the phone they never make you feel like you are a bother or an interruption of their day.

Thank you all and you are appreciated.

A thankful client

Dear **Tim Wilson** (EMS Program Manager)

I am in the process of getting my reciprocal EMT in the state of Idaho and they wanted me to contact your office because they had not received the form back from your office. Long story short... when I contacted your office, the first person I spoke to was very helpful and forwarded me to **Jacye LaFayette-Dymacek** (Health Licensing Coordinator). I spoke with Jacye several times today trying to get things straightened out. She was very helpful and friendly and went out of her way to keep me informed of the progress in this matter. I would like to commend your staff and Jacye in particular as friendly and helpful representatives of your department.

Thank you,

Michael Jones

Autism Advocate Award

Developmental Disabilities Director **Courtney Miller** received the Autism Advocate Award at the Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) Network State Conference Kearney on Thursday.

The Nebraska ASD Network provides information and training based on current research about autism spectrum disorders.



Patriot Award

Hollie Frye, DHHS Quality Assurance Coordinator at the Norfolk Regional Center was presented with the Patriot Award last month.

Jim Engel from Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), presented Hollie with the award. She was nominated by **Josh Deiterman**, Mental Health Security Specialist II, prior to being deployed. Josh is currently serving and is out on Military Leave for approximately one year.

The Patriot Award reflects the efforts made to support citizen warriors through a wide-range of measures including flexible schedules, time off prior to and after deployment, caring for families and granting leaves of absence if needed.



Fit in Fitness

Busy day? When you can't schedule a dedicated workout session, don't fret. Break up your exercise into 3 or more 10-minute sessions by blending it into what you already do. Look for opportunities to work in a workout:

- **Arrive earlier.** Get to your destination 10 minutes ahead of time and park far away. You'll have time for a walk before you make your entrance — and time to take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- **Use your workstation.** No matter what your workspace — a closed cubicle, an open room, or reception desk — you can build in physical activities. Move around while on the phone. Hold a walking meeting. Hand-deliver messages instead of shooting off an email. March in place or stretch at the photocopier. Any movement is better than no movement.
- **Pack a ready bag.** Carry a gym bag with exercise clothes and shoes, light jacket for walking outside, and water bottle. Keep athletic shoes and socks with you so you're ready for a 10-minute walk on the fly. Better yet, wear them to your destination so you can sneak in a walk before you change into work or dress shoes.
- **Walking and running.** Simple and effective, walking is a good exercise choice for almost everyone. If you prefer a little speed, try running. You can also walk and run in intervals.
- **Biking.** Most neighborhoods have biking trails just waiting to be explored.
- **Joining team sports.** Softball, baseball, and beach volleyball teams are starting to form this time of year. Be sure to practice and improve your skills while you're waiting for the season to start.
- **Playing golf.** It's time to dust off the clubs — just be sure to walk the links so you get the most out of this activity.

A daily dose of sunshine can do wonders for your mood (not to mention health — sunshine is your best source of vitamin D). Be sure to wear sun protection when exercising outdoors, even when the weather is cool. And while you're stepping out to enjoy the weather, be sure to do some spring cleaning with your workout habits.



Continue to build the foundation of Lean Six Sigma at DHHS

By Linsey Sousek

Each morning across DHHS, teams are gathering for their Lean Six Sigma daily huddles. These 5 to 15 minute meetings are crucial to align the teams' priorities each day. They ensure everyone is on the same page, giving the team time to remove obstacles, and provide a clear understanding of operations through daily metrics.

What does it mean to huddle at DHHS?

For DHHS, huddles can be anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes where daily metrics are reviewed. These huddles are not intended to be a short meeting, rather a time to review pertinent information for the day and then allow the day to get back on track.

The State of Nebraska's Operational Excellence Lean Six Sigma program is clear, concise, and nothing is left to guess work: there is a clear QDIP (Quality, Delivery, Inventory, and Productivity) instructional training tool, Kaizen checklists, DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control) project checklists, and a relentless pursuit to keep all aspects simple, direct, and applicable to everyday life.

A daily huddle has three parts: QDIP board, Swim Lanes, and Team Time. Swim Lanes are charts that help manage projects and track activities by visually depicting how a project moves through each step of the process. Swim Lanes also help identify and resolve bottlenecks that hinder project progress.

Team Time gives everyone in the group a chance to briefly see what they are working on or what obstacles are hindering them. Resolving those issues that are raised during Team Time can often require a side meeting.

What is a Daily Huddle? Check out the tool being used to communicate process improvement with the TANF team.

Samuel Malson, Economic Assistance TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) policy leader, implements daily huddles to discuss team obstacles and goals for the day.

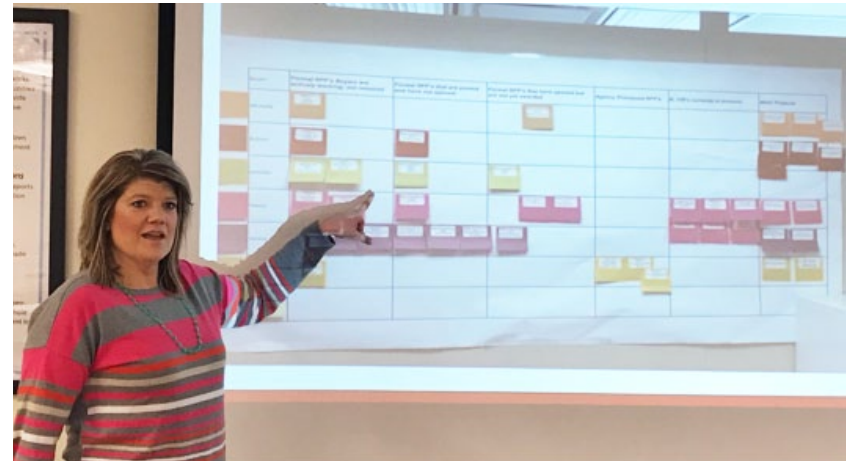
Process Improvement Coordinator Katie Maschmann has been instrumental in guiding the TANF team through the huddle process. The team has seen benefit of creating a Swim Lane board. One of the best parts of the Swim Lane board is the visual it creates for everyone to see each day. It is a constant reminder of the larger projects that the program is working on, helps to keep the projects at the forefront, and keeps our focus on the big picture.

The daily huddles provide a great opportunity to touch base as a team, and briefly identify obstacles that may need additional time dedication. It is especially beneficial because not all team members are in the same office location. The team uses Skype as the platform so all team members can see the board and each other.

Sam expressed that with a daily huddle, there is increased accountability. "Many times, we all have so many projects going on, that if you do not work on



Pictured above (left to right): TANF Policy team members Eric Scott, Erin Hansen, and Samuel Malson. Not pictured: Julie Loeffelholz and Andrea Medrano.



Training Specialist Tracy Poppe demonstrates how the Swim Lane board works.

something for a few days or talk about the project for a few days, there is a chance it could go by the wayside,” he said.

A Daily Huddle continues in the Division of Public Health - Office of Emergency Medical Services team.

In May of 2016 the Office of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) began daily huddles using a QDIP board to discuss four metrics. Each of the staff in the area have unique duties for licensing different professions, however the group was able to create QDIP goals that pertain to each of their duties. The goals focus on the key indicators of success for the group and also help to facilitate sharing best practices across each profession. If a goal is not met for the day, the group discusses what may have prevented this goal from being reached and also what can be done to overcome this obstacle in the future. The group huddles daily for 15 minutes at 8:30am to discuss the QDIP goals and any other business for the day.

Certified Lean Six Sigma Yellow Belt (C.L.S.S.Y.B)

As of December 31, 2016 all current State of Nebraska employees were White Belt Certified and new employees are being trained.

The yellow belt training is targeted at mid-level management, who are best positioned to influence their areas.

The yellow belt certification training focuses on the fundamentals and expectations of a yellow belt, and is the key to engaging DHHS employees in process improvement; making their work more efficient and effective for DHHS and its customers.

Yellow belts lead huddles that include evaluating the work, achieving set goals, and using rapid problem solving to address any issues that caused the goal not to be met. Huddles provide the opportunity to promote team work and eliminate down time.

Divisions have started using Lean Six Sigma based on priorities set by the Governor and DHHS Smart Goals.

The Lean Six Sigma - Yellow Belt Certification trainings are led by Tracy Poppe and Anne McCarthy, DHHS Learning and Development Training Specialists. Tracy and Anne have been involved since the introduction of Lean Six Sigma and are both Yellow Belt Certified. They work closely with the Center of Operational Excellence network to deliver quality training throughout the agency, preparing yellow belts to lead their team huddles. They have trained more than 100 yellow belts, crossing all divisions of DHHS.

Tracy and Anne look forward to meeting more DHHS employees as yellow belt certification sessions continue to grow and expand across DHHS.

“Focusing on process improvement not only adds value to the customer, but also reinforces the DHHS Value of Constant Commitment to Excellence, resulting in an investment into our greatest asset, our employees!” -Tracy Poppe

This initiative is all about serving the people of Nebraska. If we can do it in a more efficient and customer focused way, everyone is successful!”—Anne McCarthy

If you would like to learn more about Operational Excellence please contact Linsey Sousek at (402) 326-1281 or email her at Linsey.sousek@nebraska.gov



Pictured above (left to right): Health Licensure team members Jacye LaFayette-Dymacek, Matthew Hayden, and Claire Covert-Bybee



Training Specialist Anne McCarthy demonstrates how the QDIP board works.

10 Annoying Email Habits to Break Today

By Alison Green, *US News and World Report*



Email has revolutionized the way we communicate at work, bringing us a long way from the days of mimeographed memos or stenography. But it has also introduced a whole new array of annoyances into the workplace – some of which you might be guilty of yourself.

Here are 10 ways your use of email might be annoying your colleagues.

1. **Not answering.** When people email you a direct question, ignoring it is nearly as rude as ignoring a direct question in face-to-face conversation. And yet, offices everywhere are filled with people who don't bother responding to emails, often even after repeated follow-ups. If you're an email ignorer, realize that you're likely to develop a reputation for being unresponsive and possibly disorganized, unless you vow to begin getting back to people. Even a simple "I'm working on it" is better than silence.
2. **Requesting read receipts.** You might love the idea of knowing exactly when someone has read your email, but requesting read receipts is likely to rattle your recipients. It sends the message that you don't trust them to respond unless you build in some accountability, or that you don't trust them

to respond quickly enough for your liking. If your co-workers aren't professional enough to respond to emails without the threat of a read receipt hanging over them, you should address that problem – but sending out an "I don't trust you" signal with every communication isn't the way to do it.

3. **Sending "urgent" emails that aren't urgent.** Like the boy who cried wolf, if you abuse the urgent marker in email, soon no one will pay any attention to it – and then when you send that one truly urgent email at some point, no one will spot it. So hands-off the urgent notification unless an email truly qualifies.
4. **Emailing and then calling or coming by in person to repeat your message.** If it's crucial that your message be received immediately, then email isn't your medium; you should call or show up in person. This double delivery is so annoying that if you're in the habit of doing it, you can be confident that your co-workers are grumbling about you right now.
5. **Sending replies that make it obvious that you didn't read the email.** Responding "OK" to an email that asked an open-ended question, asking a question that was answered in the email and answering only one of three questions asked will make it obvious that you didn't actually read the email. And while this might be a time saver for you, it's going to require the sender to email you back for clarification and ultimately take up more time from both of you.
6. **Writing vague subject lines.** One-word phrases like "Question" or "Hello" squander the potential of the subject line, which when used correctly can

help your recipient find the information in your email in the future.

7. **Using colored text, creative fonts or email stationery.** Email isn't intended to be a fancy medium; most people want and expect plain text and nothing more. Mucking about with the fonts or colors is more likely to appear tacky than classy or creative. And using borders of flowers around your email text or other forms of email stationery looks frumpy and unprofessional.
8. **Requiring recipients to jump through hoops to email you.** If you have anti-spam software that requires senders to prove they're not spam-bots by filling out a CAPTCHA form before their messages to you will go through, you're (a) annoying people and (b) diminishing the chances they'll bother.
9. **Not paying attention to the email norms of the environment that you're in.** If you have a concise, to-the-point email style but everyone else in your office uses friendly openings ("Hi Beth, how are you?") and closings ("Thanks so much for your help"), you risk coming across as curt or even abrasive. People will often read tones in your emails, whether you intend them or not, so calibrating the overall "feel" of your emails to the norms in your office can help prevent miscommunication.
10. **Not checking your spelling.** Double check everything you've written before you hit send. This can also help prevent miscommunication.

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