

# CONNECTIONS

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

## Nebraska's Newborn Screening program celebrates 50 years

*From a news release by Leah Bucco-White and Judi Yorges*

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of newborn screening in Nebraska. This DHHS program has improved and/or saved the lives of hundreds of babies in Nebraska by screening for serious illness.

"I want to start out by saying how grateful I am for newborn screening in Nebraska. Without it, my life and the lives of others could be so much different," said **Emily Linafelter**, a local college student diagnosed with PKU, a genetic disorder. Thanks to the newborn screening test I was given right at birth, I am able to live a perfectly normal and healthy life."



Emily Linafelter

"As Nebraska celebrates 50 years of newborn screening, hundreds of babies get to celebrate birthdays that may not have been," said **Dr. Tom Williams**, Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS. "Through a public-private partnership, our Newborn Screening program is truly a public health success story."

Nebraska is one of only a few states that uses a public-private partnership to achieve newborn screening testing for all babies. Due to a strong system involving hospital personnel, Nebraska's contracted newborn screening laboratory, DHHS follow-up staff and Nebraska's pediatric and specialty providers, Nebraska enjoys some of the fastest turnaround times in the nation.

Nebraska state law requires that all newborns be tested for 29 conditions, all of which can cause serious problems, and even death, if they are not diagnosed and treated early in life. The screening uses a few drops of blood from the newborn's heel and is completed prior to discharge from the birthing facility.

"Newborn screening is something that's done for every baby born in

Nebraska," said **Julie Luedtke**, Newborn Screening Program Manager. "It identifies conditions that could be harmful to a child. Conditions that a parent can't see and without immediate signs or symptoms, yet they can start affecting a baby's health or survival within days of birth."

While each condition is individually rare, in Nebraska one in every 500-600 babies born is affected by one of them. Out of the approximately 27,000 babies screened in 2015, 58 newborns were identified with conditions and treated in time to prevent or reduce problems associated with those conditions.

### History

Following development of a new screening test by Dr. Robert Guthrie, the first state-mandated newborn screening programs began in 1963 to find babies with a rare condition known as "PKU." When detected early and treated with a special diet, children with PKU lead a normal life.

Fifty years later, more than 27,000 newborns are screened annually in Nebraska for 29 different genetic and metabolic conditions, plus hearing loss and critical congenital heart defects.

### Newborn Screening in Nebraska:

- 1967** Nebraska law mandates newborn screening for one condition.
- 1987** Nebraska newborn screening now includes three conditions.
- 1996** First regulations created to standardize newborn screening.
- 1996-2014** Conditions included in newborn screening continue to expand.
- 2000** Infant Hearing Act passes which requires newborn hearing screening.
- 2017** Today, Nebraska screens for 29 conditions on the blood spot panel.

For more information on newborn screening, [click here](#).

## Stay Connected on



### make the connection . . .

**DHHS Public Website:** [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)  
**DHHS Employee Website:** <http://dhhsemployees/>  
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# System of Care Workgroups Convene

By Julie Naughton

Last September DHHS's Division of Behavioral Health received a grant to expand and sustain the System of Care, a framework for designing mental health services and supports for children and youth who have a serious emotional disturbance and their families. A System of Care connects and coordinates the work of state child-serving agencies, nonprofit and local governments, behavioral health care providers, families and patient advocates. It helps children, youth and families function better at home, in school, in the community and in life.

The following groups, which include DHHS staff members as well as external partners, have been created and are beginning to meet:

- **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Work Team**  
The CQI Work Team is working to design a statewide CQI program, monitor progress, identify baseline data and outcome measures correlating to the functional and process outcomes.
- **Cross-System Services and Support Work Team**  
The Cross-System Services and Support Work Team is working to ensure Nebraskans will have access to a broad array of services that are family driven, youth guided and good for the person.
- **Financial Investment Work Team**  
The Financial Investment Work Team is working to create and improve funding of the System of Care. Goals include creating and improving funding mechanisms,

developing strategies for cross-system braiding of funds based on outcomes of the Financial Blueprint Project.

- **Social Marketing and Communications Work Team**  
The Social Marketing and Communications Work Team is creating and implementing a communications plan that will raise awareness of the Nebraska System of Care and implement the Nebraska System of Care principles and practices across systems, organizations and other entities.
- **Training Work Team**  
The Training Work Team is working to Implement workforce development mechanisms, provide training, technical assistance and coaching to regional and local SOC teams, regional, tribal and community levels.
- **Implementation Team**  
The implementation team is made up of state and regional leadership to provide guidance to the implementation of the SOC. This team guides implementation of the overall program.
- **Family Advisory Council**  
This team consists of family members who look at how the program serves families.
- **Youth Advisory Council**  
This team is made of youth who will guide program implementation. The groups will work together throughout the year to ensure that project goals are met.



Courtney Phillips, CEO

## Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

### Happy 2017 #TeamDHHS:

I hope these first few months of the New Year have been treating you well.

As 2017 gets underway, so does the 105th Nebraska Legislative session. As I mentioned in my email to y'all, DHHS has 13 bills this year introduced on our behalf or at the request of Governor Ricketts. The short "one-liner" descriptions of these bills are:

**LB 284**, by Sen. Riepe, will require criminal history record information checks under the Child Care Licensing Act to comply with federal requirements.

**LB 333**, by Sen. Riepe at the request of the Governor, eliminates the state-funded State Disability program which is time limited assistance not federally mandated.

**LB 334**, by Sen. Riepe at the request of the Governor, ends the requirement for Family Finding pilot project contracts.

**LB 335**, by Sen. Riepe at request of the Governor, changes provisions relating to a child care market rate survey.

**LB 336**, by Sen. Riepe at request of the Governor, allows DHHS to charge a fee to recover expenses in carrying out child protection record checks.

**LB 342**, by Sen. Erdman at the request of the Governor, adopts the Nurse Compact providing for reciprocity and provides for temporary nursing licenses for military spouses.

**LB 343**, by Sen. Riepe at request of the Governor, removes burdensome and outdated licensing requirements for cosmetology, nail technology, massage therapy, and others.

**LB 344**, by Sen. Albrecht at request of the Governor, reduces complexity and regulatory requirements for mental health and substance abuse occupational licensure and for mental health and substance abuse centers.

**LB 417**, by Sen. Riepe, changes public health and welfare provisions to enhance efficiency in areas relating to Alternative Response, nursing assistants, behavioral health peer support, reports, senior companion volunteers, quality review teams and Uniform Credentialing Act notices.

**LB 460**, by Sen. Smith, changes provisions regulating non-emergency transportation for Medicaid customers.

**LB 495**, by Sen. Riepe, changes provisions to bring Nebraska into compliance with federal requirements for developmental disability services.

**LB 542**, by Sen. Kuehn, provides for liens and recovery of debt incurred under the Medicaid program.

**LB 605**, by Sen. Riepe, changes provisions relating to the Intermediate Care Facility for persons with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD) Reimbursement Protection Fund to fully maximize federal matching funds.



To take a closer look at each bill in our legislative package, [click here](#).

These bills and proposals will help the thousands of Nebraskans we serve live better lives. They reflect the work we do here each day and give us the chance to create a more efficient and effective government, reduce regulatory complexity, and improve services for Nebraska's most vulnerable citizens.

I am grateful to those team members who brought these ideas up through our bill proposal process last summer.

We post our testimony and letters that are presented at the public hearings to our [public website](#). You can subscribe to that page if you're interested in knowing what action we take. You can also access information on the [legislature's website](#). Bryson Bartels is our DHHS legislative coordinator and Jessie Sampson is our legislative assistant. If you have any questions about our bills or how to access information, feel free to send them an email or call.

2017 promises to be one of growth, excitement, and new opportunities for DHHS as an agency. I am excited to be on this journey with y'all and can't wait to see what the future holds for #TeamDHHS.

# Way to Go!

**Brett Hynes** works at Beatrice State Development Center (BSDC) and one evening in October one of his coworkers started choking. She came out of the staff office to find help and Brett was there. Brett quickly began performing abdominal thrusts and was able to dislodge the food. Due to his quick actions he saved the life of a coworker. She was not able to be there when we presented Brett with a certificate for saving her life but she is very grateful and thankful that Brett was there. We are blessed to have him working with us.

*-Submitted by **Jadah Morrison***



**Patrick Yacks, RN**, Nursing Supervisor at Beatrice State Development Center, was nominated by **Aaron Parde, LPN**, who supports individuals during 3rd shift, to receive the **Patriot Award**. An employee serving in the National Guard or Reserve, or the spouse of a Guard or Reserve member, may nominate an individual's supervisor for support provided directly to the nominating Service member and his or her family. 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.

The Patriot Award is the first in a series of awards from ESGR, a Department of Defense program, established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers. Congratulations Patrick!

*-Submitted by **Robin Curry***



## DHHS in the news

#TeamDHHS, have you see the recent editorials focusing on the good things happening here at DHHS? These accolades would not be possible without all of the hard work that you all do each day to help people live better lives.

Check them out by clicking on the links below.

Omaha World Herald

[Nebraska HHS is changing for better, January 22, 2017](#)

Omaha World Herald

[Midlands Voices: HHS road map to serving Nebraska](#)

Governor's Weekly Column

[More Effective, More Efficient Government, January 20, 2017](#)

Omaha World-Herald

[Editorial: HHS Launches improvements, Jan. 7, 2017](#)

Omaha World-Herald

[Editorial: Call center off the hook, Dec. 31, 2016](#)

Governor's Weekly Column

[Making Government Work, Dec. 23, 2016](#)

Lincoln Journal Star

[Editorial, 12/21: Congrats for improving HHS service, Dec. 21, 2016](#)

Governor's Weekly Column

[Gov. Ricketts, Health and Human Services Unveil WIC Journey, Dec. 19, 2016](#)

Governor's Weekly Column

[Gov. Ricketts Announces Accelerated Eligibility for Developmental Disabilities Services, Dec. 19, 2016](#)

Lincoln Journal Star

[Editorial, 11/25: HHS shows subtle signs of success, Nov. 25, 2016](#)



## 150 years of candles - Nebraska's Sesquicentennial statehood celebration

By Melissa Lindell

With the start of a New Year comes many resolutions to get healthy, move more, and to give back. What if we told you that you can do all of that AND join in on Nebraska's 150 years of statehood celebration this year?

Nebraska reaches a big milestone in 2017 when our state celebrates its 150th birthday in March. State officials have come up with several ways for you to join in on the fun of Nebraska's

Sesquicentennial celebration all year long. Two of those are the Nebraska150 Challenge and the Nebraska Impact Initiative.

The Nebraska150 Challenge is an online fitness program in association with the Nebraska Sports Council. It wants to make living healthy fun by challenging Nebraskans to move 150 miles or more this year.

Through an interactive website, [www.ne150challenge.com](http://www.ne150challenge.com), individuals and groups can register and document miles for walking, running, biking, swimming, kayaking, skateboarding, jump roping, or any other type of exercise. An online physical activity converter helps participants easily turn action into miles. Participants

will track their progress and earn virtual badges for reaching certain milestones.

This challenge is about more than just logging miles, it's about discovering new trails and finding new ways and events to challenge yourself. And then enjoying the benefits of being active including better health.

Dr. Tom Williams, the DHHS Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health says, "The NE 150 Challenge is a fantastic opportunity to help people live better and healthier lives by focusing on getting active. How fitting is it that we are celebrating 150 years as a state and by chance the Physical Activity Guidelines for American's suggests achieving 150 minutes a week of physical activity for significant health improvement?"

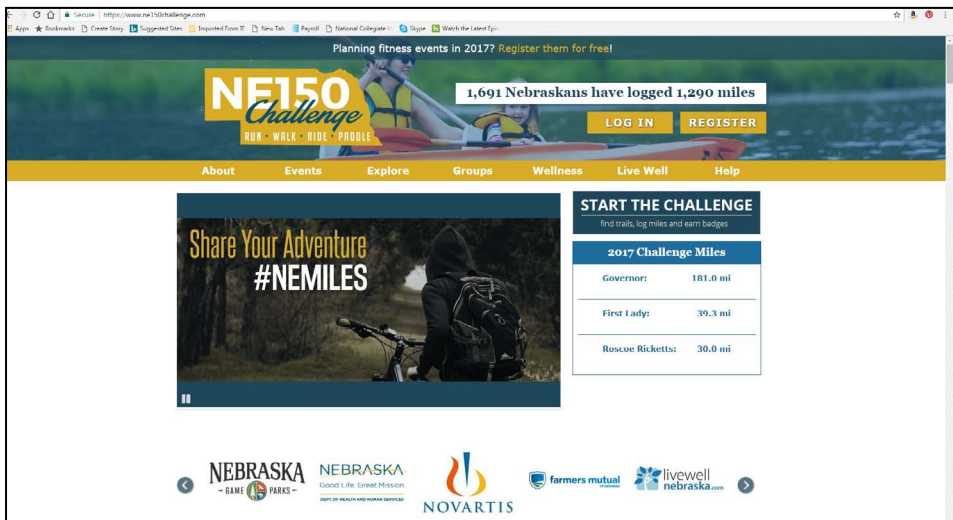
Governor Ricketts and the first family started logging miles at the beginning of the year. You can check out their progress, (as well as the progress of Olive, the first Hedgehog!) on the website [www.ne150challenge.com](http://www.ne150challenge.com)

If you want to give back in 2017, then the Nebraska Impact Initiative

is for you. It challenges residents to volunteer 150 hours or more during the year. You can do those hours alone, or as part of a group. [Click here](#) to connect with volunteer opportunities in your area.



Dr. Tom Williams, DHHS Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health and his Bearded Collies log some miles.



# Health Tips

## My Oh My Omega

Recent science suggests health benefits come not from a low-fat diet, but a right-fat diet. Omega-3 fatty acids have been found to lower cancer risk, reduce depression, and boost brain development. But which source packs the most punch?

- **Go fish:** Seafood is nature's top omega-3 dispenser — giving you both DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid), 2 essential lipids that must be obtained through what you eat. But concerns over mercury contamination scare many would-be fish-eaters into the poultry aisle. While the American Heart Association suggests consuming a catch twice a week, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends restricting fish to 12 ounces/week and avoiding big predators like shark or swordfish. Your best option is wild salmon, which is generally low in pollutants but rich in the healthy oil. Plus, research shows its high selenium content may protect against mercury's harmful effects.
- **Go nuts:** Flax and walnuts deliver omega-3 in the form of ALA (alpha-linolenic acid), which the body converts into DHA and EPA.

Avoid trans and saturated fats, which can disrupt the conversion. Vitamins B6, B3, and C, zinc, and magnesium all play a crucial role in the enzyme process, so get sufficient amounts.

- **Supplement:** Cod liver oil and fish oil are available without prescription. Supplements can be beneficial if you're not getting enough omega-3s from diet alone. But they may produce negative side effects, so check with your doctor before taking them.

## Energy Essentials

If you're feeling leveled by lethargy lately, fight back by boosting your metabolism — defined by the National Institutes of Health as “all the physical and chemical processes in the body that convert or use energy.” To improve your stamina and general health, avoid trendy supplements and drinks that claim to perform metabolism miracles. Instead opt for these time-tested tips to keep your body's engine humming:

- **Exercise:** Strength training 2 or 3 times a week will build muscle, and muscle burns more calories than fat. Add 30–60 minutes of regular cardiovascular exercise — such as jogging, elliptical, or fast walking — to see results.



- **Don't starve yourself:** Research indicates that skipping meals, especially breakfast, can actually slow down your metabolism.
- **Eat more often:** Many dieters are finding success by spreading out their calories and eating several smaller meals about every 3–4 hours.
- **Stay hydrated:** Keep that water flowing and avoid dehydration, which produces the same unwanted metabolic effect as starvation.
- **Try green tea:** It can raise your metabolism while providing an antioxidant and caffeine infusion.
- **Avoid sugar:** Soft drinks, alcohol, and processed foods can all contribute to weight gain. Aim for healthier calories from produce, whole grains, lean protein, and low-fat dairy.

## The Inside Pitch

When blustery weather snags your outdoor walking plans, where will you turn? Luckily, indoor options are aplenty:

- **Try a treadmill.** These offer assorted speeds/inclines and challenging programs — and the convenience can't be beat if you have one at home. A good quality machine is expensive, but you can purchase a used treadmill. Be sure to check service records, and go for newer models with reputable brands.
- **Get on the right track.** Besides rows of treadmills, many workout facilities have indoor tracks. Be sure to obey their rules: Walk in the right direction (each day is usually designated clockwise or counterclockwise) and the correct lane (typically, the inside lane is for walkers, middle lane for joggers, and outside lane for runners). Factor in the gym's location and hours. Not ready for a membership? Ask about free trials and day passes.
- **Window shop while you walk.** Call your local shopping center and inquire about designated hours for “mall walkers” — many open doors early and keep them open later; some provide information about starting or joining a walking club.

## Winter Fall Prevention

### Fall Safety Tips for Winter

**1. Focus on Footwear:** Rubber Soles, especially those with plenty of tread, provide better traction on snow and ice than either leather or plastic soles, making them the best selection.

**2. Beware of Black Ice:** It's just as slippery as regular ice, but difficult to see, making it a top winter safety concern. Stay on clear pathways or ones that have been treated with sand or salt.

**3. Make Winter Safety a Priority:** Avoid rushing and allow yourself extra time to reach your destination safely. Avoid short-cuts through snow or over icy areas

**4. Walk Like a Penguin:** When walking on ground that is slippery with ice or snow – take short, shuffling steps, curl your toes under and walk flatfooted



## # Team DHHS reaches Lean Six Sigma White Belt Certification goal

Congratulations #TeamDHHS, you are part of the 12,000 state team members who have completed basic process improvement training through the Center of Operational Excellence, and are now white belt certified.

[Recently](#) the Governor's office announced that all agency code team members are white belt certified.

"Understanding process improvement is fundamental to making state government more effective, more efficient, and more customer-focused," said Governor Ricketts. "This training will help our team at the State of Nebraska focus on streamlining and structuring state services to help grow Nebraska."

Thank you to everyone for completing the training before the December 31 deadline.




# In Gratitude



Source: ThinkStock


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.



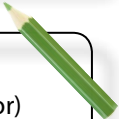
**Elizabeth Noble**, (Social Services Worker) was "so kind and patient when I talked to her...treated me as a person and with respect and you could tell she really wanted to help me..."

**-A grateful client**




"Hi **Jenna Rezabek**, (Child/Family Services Specialist) Just thought I would let you know (the other parent) finally agreed to me having physical custody and it's all done and finalized. I just wanted to thank you again for everything you did for (my daughter) and all you do for other children as well. I know your job can be thankless sometimes but just wanted you to know your work is appreciated"

**- A thankful parent**



**Jennifer Ihle**, (DHHS Program Coordinator) has been doing a great job facilitating the Women's Council. Attendance is up considerably, (from 20% to 56%) and more meetings took place this past Fiscal Year than the previous year or two. Good to see that trajectory."

**-Molly Klocksins**, Disability Rights Nebraska



To all the **(YRTC) Kearney Staff** who worked on Thanksgiving Day- Thank you so much for your kindness and dedication. Thank you for the wonderful Thanksgiving Day meal to all of you that worked so hard to give us a wonderful holiday! God Bless you!

With love,

**- A grateful youth and his family**