

CONNECTIONS

May 2016 VOLUME 16, ISSUE 5

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

System of Care

For Raevin Bigelow, the thought of a coordinated and integrated Behavioral Health System of Care for children and youth gives her goose bumps, in a positive, this-will-be-great kind of way. Raevin, who is active in Project Everlast for former state wards, spoke at the same news conference in early April where Governor Pete Ricketts, CEO Courtney Phillips, and Behavioral Health division director Sheri Dawson announced the state is developing a System of Care in response to the needs of children and youth with serious emotional disorders.

"There is no question it can be confusing and often times challenging for families to access behavioral health services for their children," said

Governor Ricketts. "With the new System of Care, DHHS and its partners will deliver services in a more effective and customer-oriented manner."

"The children's System of Care puts families at the center of services as equal partners," Sheri said. "This is a new way of doing business that involves and addresses the needs of each child and each family."

The initiative follows a planning process that included input from more than 1,000 families, youth, system partners, service providers and others. DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips said the partnership is targeted at providing "the right services at the right time and in the right place" with a goal of helping families stay together and thrive in their communities.

Courtney said Nebraska expects to see improvements within three to five years. Some of those expected improvements include an increase in school attendance and performance; an

increase in the percent of youth and young adults living in home settings; a decrease in the average age of first system contact; and a decrease in the cost per youth receiving services.

DHHS will partner closely with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, a nonprofit organization working with local, state and national partners to support children, young adults and families at risk.

Over 37,000 children in Nebraska experience behavioral health disorders, according to the Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, and about 16,000 Nebraska adolescents ages 12-17 had at least one major depressive episode in 2014, according to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

For more information on System of Care, [click here](#) :

CNVH Groundbreaking

Ground has been broken for the brand new Central Nebraska Veterans' Home in Kearney. The home will replace the aging Grand Island Veterans' Home. The land where the



home will be built was once used as a military base. Kearney Mayor Stan Clouse said of the land, "In a sense, it's coming back [to its roots]."

"This project has been a priority for Nebraska," said DHHS Division of Veterans' Homes Director John Hilgert. "This moves us closer to a new, modern facility for Nebraska's heroes, for those who have served our country with honor. They cared for us. They cared for our freedom, they cared for our nation, they cared for our security and, all together, let's continue to care for them," he said.

More than 200 people turned out for the groundbreaking. Construction on the 225-bed Vet's home began in early April. It is expected to be open in 2018. For more information, [click here](#)



Stay Connected on



make the connection . . .

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

Chief Executive Officer: Courtney Phillips	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Calder Lynch
Behavioral Health Division Director: Sheri Dawson	Public Health Division Acting Director: Courtney Phillips
Children and Family Services Division Director: Doug Weinberg	Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: Courtney Miller	

Connections is published for employees of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services by Communications and Legislative Services (CLS).

CLS Administrator: Kathie Osterman	Graphics and Layout: Judy Barker
Editor: Melissa Lindell	

Readers are invited to submit news, photos and story ideas to the editor via:

Phone: (402) 471-4047
Fax: (402) 471-3996
E-mail: melissa.lindell@nebraska.gov
Interagency mail: NE State Office Bldg. 3rd Floor
 U.S. mail: P.O. Box 95026
 301 Centennial Mall South
 Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026

DHHS Divisions, Stakeholders Work to Improve Developmental Disability Services

By Julie Naughton

The DHHS Divisions of Developmental Disabilities and Medicaid and Long-Term Care are working closely together to rewrite three Medicaid home and community-based waivers that are going through the federal renewal process. Two waivers provide services for adults with developmental disabilities and one provides services for children with developmental disabilities.

“These divisions are working together and with our partners to develop services that best meet the needs of those we serve,” Courtney Phillips, CEO, said. “We have a renewed commitment to make government better and more customer-focused for the citizens of Nebraska.”

“We work better when we work together, and our team is excited to partner with our sister division to hear directly from stakeholders as we work to redesign and improve our collective system of supports and services for people with disabilities,” said Calder Lynch, director of the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care.

Courtney Miller, director of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, said DHHS is committed to a transparent, inclusive approach to addressing the challenges and

opportunities ahead. “In addition to our work on the Medicaid waivers, we are taking a complete inventory of our developmental disability service system, which has become a road map to necessary improvements,” said Miller. “Last fall, we held nine town hall-style forums, and we have had conversations with families, friends, providers and advocates – critical voices associated with the programs that serve Nebraskans with developmental disabilities.”

And DHHS’s partners are responding positively. “Our recommendations for more family and community involvement in the planning process has been greeted with positive feedback and quick action,” said Mike Tufte, executive director of PIT Nebraska, a statewide resource for families of children with disabilities or special health care needs. PTI Nebraska is also the home of the Family to Family Health Information Center (F2FHIC). “The creation of the workgroups has been a welcome change and we can see the benefits already. We are excited to continue to work with Courtney and the all new leadership at DHHS and DD for a more efficient and family-friendly system.”

Miller said key priorities are directed at the basic principles of a focus on person-centered customer

service, improving access and service availability while assuring basic safeguards, improving fiscal and program accountability and performance, honoring individualization, and promoting consumer choice and self-determination. “Our agency mission is to help people live better lives, and this process is dedicated to fulfilling this mission for those we serve,” continued Miller.

Stakeholder workgroups have also been established on: application and eligibility, health and safety, person-centered planning, prioritization and wait list, provider involvement, quality improvement, and service definitions.

Information from stakeholders will be used in the waiver applications that will be submitted for approval by the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services.

For more information about the Medicaid waiver initiative [click here](#).



Courtney Phillips, CEO

Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

In addition to our work internally, we're also working in new ways with our partners and stakeholders, involving them early in discussions because their perspective, input and feedback is important.

It truly has been a full team effort.

The changes we are making as we help people live better lives are being noticed, and it's a great feeling to know there is support for the issues we believe are important.

I hear positive comments from citizens and stakeholders and so does Gov. Ricketts as he travels across the state. I also appreciate getting emails and notes from you about your successes and the good things our customers have to say.

You may have heard me mention our work on a DHHS Business Plan and I'm pleased to say we are almost ready to roll it out. This plan will outline our priorities for the coming year, through June 2017. It follows the lead of Governor Ricketts to improve performance of state government through strategic actions and measureable outcomes. Stay tuned!

While I'm excited about looking forward to what lies ahead, I want to capture some of the accomplishments that stand out from the past 12 months:

- Meeting with and hearing from employees in offices and facilities across the state during my first year was great. I'll be out traveling again this summer to places I didn't make it to last year.
- The ACCESSNebraska Economic Assistance average call wait times

were just over one minute in March, down from an average of over 17 minutes a year ago. The number of calls are down 26 percent over this time last year.

- For the first time, during 2015 the child welfare system exceeded all six federal children and family services review standards. Three years ago Nebraska met only two standards.
- At the end of March, 98.2 percent of SNAP applications were processed within federal guidelines, up from 88.68 percent in March 2015. Nebraska ranks in the top 10 nationally for the case and procedural error rate and has an overall national ranking of 27, up from 48 a year ago.
- Recent improvements to the nurse licensing process include simplified license applications, streamlined screening, faster turnaround time, and a more customer friendly website. The first time completion rate improved from 28 percent to 95 percent. The average application processing time has decreased from 73 days to 57 days. Nearly twice as many applications are processed each week, increasing from 27 to 50.
- The Lincoln Regional Center is the only psychiatric hospital in the state recognized in 2015 as a Top Performer on Key Quality Measures by The Joint Commission, the leading accreditor of health care organizations in the U.S. Just eight of 25 hospitals in Nebraska that submitted data were recognized.
- U.S. Department of Justice ended oversight of the Beatrice State Developmental Center in recognition of the progress made in protecting and serving residents. DHHS also expanded and enhanced community capacity and improved outcomes for people with developmental disabilities.
- Last month we launched a System of Care initiative, together with public and private agencies, families and youth, to serve children and youth who have a serious emotional disturbance, and their families in a new, coordinated way.
- We've received federal approval to cover behavioral modification services as part of the Medicaid program for children with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities.
- We've signed contracts with three health plans for Heritage Health, a new Medicaid managed care program that will combine Medicaid physical health, behavioral health, and pharmacy services, coordinating and integrating services to improve health outcomes for Medicaid clients effective January 1, 2017.
- Last spring we received a \$6 million grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust and through a partnership with local Emergency Medical Services and hospitals, life-saving automated CPR equipment for heart attack

(Courtney's article continued pg 4)

#TeamDHHS:

One year. It's hard to believe but yes, April 2 was my first year anniversary with DHHS!

It's gone by quickly, we've accomplished so much together, and Langston and I made it through our first Nebraska winter.

I want to thank y'all for all you've done this past year. Everyone has stepped up and we can see that in our achievements, in our improved responsiveness, and transparency in providing Nebraskans with the high-quality and efficient services they deserve.

I also want to thank Governor Ricketts for assembling a dynamic team of directors for DHHS who are sharing their experiences, insights and leadership with us all.

Make a Difference, Take a Stand: June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

By Katie Weidner



In Nebraska each year, Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates approximately 3,000 allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Over 300 persons 60 and older were found to have been abused, neglected, and/or exploited in 2015. And that's only the reported cases. Experts believe that for every reported case, as many as 23 cases go unreported.

Many victims are people with disabilities, or are older, frail, and depend on others to meet their most basic needs. Many victims are isolated, ashamed, or embarrassed, particularly if a family member is the abuser. Many are afraid to report for fear that the abuse will get worse or that they will have no one to care for them. Declines in cognitive and physical functions make some seniors more vulnerable to victimization as well.

Abusers of vulnerable and older adults are both women and men, and may be family members, friends, or "trusted others." Self-neglect and exploitation are the most common situations that APS workers deal with.

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It is a time to spotlight the mistreatment of vulnerable and older adults and to communicate how people, organizations, and communities can take action now.

DHHS employees involved with vulnerable adult and elder abuse

awareness developed a toolkit with ideas and resources to help people understand vulnerable and elder adult abuse issues and also to plan and implement effective awareness campaigns. The toolkit contains a wealth of important information, like:

Signs of neglect by caregivers or self-neglect:

- Unusual weight loss, malnutrition, or dehydration;
- Untreated physical problems, such as bed sores;
- Unsanitary living conditions such as dirt, bugs, soiled bedding and clothes, poor hygiene;
- Unsuitable clothing or covering for the weather;
- Unsafe living conditions: no heat or running water, faulty or exposed wiring, fire hazards;
- Desertion of the vulnerable adult or elder at a public place.

Signs of financial exploitation:

- Sudden changes in bank accounts or banking practices such as unexplained withdrawals of large amounts of money;
- Additional names on an older person's bank cards or checking accounts;
- Abrupt changes in a will or other financial documents;
- Disappearance of funds, possessions, or medications;
- Unpaid bills or substandard care despite the availability of funds;
- Evidence of the elder's signature being forged;
- The sudden appearance of previously uninvolved relatives;
- Payment for unnecessary services;

- Reports from the individual of financial exploitation.

Help prevent elder or vulnerable adult abuse and neglect by:

- Listening with empathy and without judgment to vulnerable adults, elders, and their caregiver.
- Watching for warning signs that might indicate abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- Looking at the elder or vulnerable adult's medications. Do the amounts left match how much should be gone?
- Watch for possible financial abuse. Ask the individual if they need help looking over their bank or credit card statements and talk about authorized vs. unauthorized transactions.
- Call and visit as often as you can and offer to stay with the individual so the caregiver can have a break.
- Talk to the individual about the phone calls and letters they have been receiving. Talk about prominent scams and how to look out for them.

Elder and vulnerable adult abuse can happen to anyone—a loved one, a neighbor, a friend, and even to you. It's important that we all be on the lookout for activities affecting the vulnerable or the elderly.

If you or someone you know suspects vulnerable adult abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation, call 1-800-652-1999.

For more information, visit

www.dhhs.ne.gov/weaad

(Courtney's article from pg 3)

victims is being purchased for 360 ambulance services and 80 hospitals in the state and is already saving lives.

- We also received \$3.5 million in federal grants to help reduce the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs by working with partners to establish prescription guidelines, increasing provider and patient education, and enhancing Nebraska's prescription drug monitoring program.
- Ground was broken in March for the Central Nebraska Veterans' Home in Kearney, another milestone for the new facility to be completed in 2018.
- We hit 100% with our legislative package this year. All eight of our bills passed and were signed into law by Governor Ricketts. Kudos to the hard work from across the agency on this important effort.

These are significant achievements and make for a better #TeamDHHS. While we have much yet to do, the positive feedback we're receiving is encouraging and motivating. I look forward to our opportunities in Year Two.

And lastly, as we move into summer, I hope you have the opportunity to take needed time off to re-energize and spend special times with family and friends. And as our Public Health friends will remind us, use seat belts, wear sunscreen and practice food safety!

Transforming Melissa: Small Steps Yield a Big Reward

By: Julie Naughton

Note: May is National Health and Fitness Month and Global Employee Health and Fitness Month. Here's hoping this story can be a motivator for better health. Melissa participates in the state's Wellness Plan.

Melissa Lindell has lost herself. Half of herself, that is.

To look at Melissa, you'd never know that she lost 150 pounds – going from a high of 300 pounds to 150 pounds. And what's even more remarkable is the way that she did it: the old-fashioned way, incorporating simple wellness tips into her daily routine, such as eating smaller portions and adding light exercise to her routine. In fact, you may see the 5'9" public information officer for the Department of Health and Human Services doing a few laps around the 3rd floor of the State Office Building each day, as she logs the 10,000 steps a day prescribed by the State's Wellness Options Health Plan while on breaks and her lunch hour.

As part of May's Global Employee Health and Fitness month, Melissa shared her story with Connections.

Melissa, who began gaining weight in the fifth grade, noted that the catalyst of her major change was a former co-worker, who looked at her pre-diet lunch of cheeseburgers and asked her point blank, "why are you eating that junk?" As well, her mother, a cardiac nurse, warned of the dangers of overeating and recommended an 80/20 plan: eating healthily 80 percent of the time, allowing less-healthy treats the

remaining 20 percent of the time. "I realized that my quality of life was not going to be great as I got older if I held on to the weight," Melissa said.

So Melissa, then 23, decided she'd try eating a new way and kick what she calls "the other f-word." While no food was off-limits ("that's an invitation

to binge," she said of "forbidden" foods), breakfast was typically oatmeal or half a cup of Special K cereal; lunch, a Lean Cuisine meal – "because they were already portioned out," she explained – and dinner a salad with

chicken and dressing on the side from Runza. "I'd dip my fork into the dressing, then into the salad," she said. "And portion control is absolutely key. With a lot of restaurant meals, I'll ask for a to-go container and automatically put half of the food in it for another meal. When I was losing weight, I often ordered a kids' meal. They are often healthier, and the portions are more in line with what we should be eating. And – bonus – they're cheaper."



Within a month, Melissa lost 20 pounds and was inspired to keep going, even though her doctor told her she'd likely never get below 200 pounds. "I took that as a challenge," she said with a smile. Teaming up with two close friends, Melissa began a regular gym routine two months after beginning her

dietary changes. "Even when I didn't feel like working out, my friends would drag me out of the house and to the gym," she remembered (six months later and 60 pounds down, Melissa was a bridesmaid for one of those friends.) Melissa began by walking slowly on the treadmill, gradually adding weight-lifting

and elliptical training to her routine. "I didn't do everything at once," she said. "I think if I'd tried to completely change the way I ate and began exercising right away I'd set myself up to fail. So I started eating more healthily, then began to work in the exercise piece."

Melissa emphasizes that her weight-loss journey was a slow and steady path, rather than a faddish, lose-weight-quick scheme. "I started losing weight in June

2005, and I hit my goal in October 2011," she said. That included a year-long plateau at 90 pounds down, which she broke through when she began running. She will run the Lincoln Half-Marathon for the sixth consecutive year in May 2016, and has run 11 other Half-Marathons and ran the Chicago Marathon in 2012. She's also done "countless" 5K and 10K races. "It's become a stress reliever," she said. "I get all itchy when I haven't run. Given a long-enough run, I feel like I could solve all the world's problems."

Melissa also emphasizes that keeping weight off is a matter of constant vigilance. "I weigh myself every day, and my weight will be something I'll always have to watch," she said. "I don't have a superhuman metabolism. It's hard. But choose your hard." But it's a worthwhile tradeoff. "I had no self-confidence when I was younger," she said. "People don't see you when you're that big, even though you take up so much space. If I had a dollar for every time I heard, 'you have such a pretty face...' Everyone knows what that dot dot dot means, even if they don't say it out loud."

She encourages everyone who is thinking of making lifestyle changes to believe in themselves enough to do it. "It has to be on your time, but getting healthy is a gift you give your future self," she said. "And don't beat yourself up if you slip. Every day is a new day."

Way to Go!

Statewide and National Recognitions, Honors and Awards

Ashley Newmyer, an Epidemiology Surveillance Coordinator in Public Health, received a special award. She was one of seven people who was recognized by the Safe States Alliance for her exceptional contributions to injury and violence prevention. Ashley received the Rising Star award for her invaluable epidemiologic and data analysis work within the department, particularly her efforts surrounding the enhancement of the state Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Below are excerpts from the nomination form that Nebraska's Injury Prevention Team put together that resulted in Ashley getting the award. Congratulations Ashley!

There is a very bright Rising Star in the field of violence and injury prevention shining in the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Injury Prevention Program!

In her role as the Epidemiology Surveillance Coordinator, Ashley Newmyer provides invaluable epidemiological and data analysis to support the work of the Nebraska Injury Prevention Program. Her responsibilities include completing all of the CDC Core Grant required data as well as overseeing the evaluation efforts for the grant. She responds to a variety of data requests from partners inside and outside the agency. The CODES program, which functions in partnership with the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety, is also under her watch.



Ashley Newmyer (left) receives the Rising Star Award

Ashley was instrumental in Nebraska's successful application for the CDC Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention for States funding, leading parts of the writing and meeting with partners to develop a work plan. She is instrumental in the collaborative work around the enhancement of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program in Nebraska.

Ashley's dedication to her work and to others is very evident. She is quick to take the initiative to research and learn more about any new injury-related topics not only from the epidemiological perspective, but also from the perspective of how it strengthens the field of injury and violence prevention. She is always willing to work with and help other programs utilize data in order to

improve public health, wellness, and awareness. Ashley is very skilled at taking the complexities of epidemiologic data and surveillance and making it easily understandable and useable to community partners and others who may use it.

Her commitment to advancing the field of injury and violence prevention and Safe States is also demonstrated by her participation in the Safe States Alliance ISW9 – ICD10-CM Workgroup. She is also active in the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and serves on committees within that organization as well.

Peg Ogea-Ginsburg, Injury Prevention Program Manager in the Division of Public Health, was honored by the Brain Injury Association of Nebraska at their annual conference as the 2016 recipient of the Above and Beyond Award. In introducing her, the following was said by the Association's Executive Director:

You've heard the saying: "Never promise more than you can deliver and always deliver more than you promise." When we hear this phrase, we are certain this must be the phase by which Peg Ogea-Ginsburg lives. Because of this work ethic, Brain Injury Association of Nebraska is proud to present the Above and Beyond Award to Peg Ogea-Ginsburg.

She's like many of us in that she possesses strong qualities... She's intelligent, creative, positive, hard-working, resourceful, and driven. What makes her stand out is an amazing ability to utilize them all and – sometimes – at the drop of a hat. Her gift is being able to see the big picture, analyze it, and move forward accordingly; mindful of the people who will be impacted the most. In our case, it's individuals who may be at risk for sustaining a brain injury.

She believes in prevention and in Brain Injury Association of Nebraska. She is one of our strongest advocates; not just because of the partnerships she's helped form and the support she consistently can count on her.

Above and beyond... So fitting for a woman with that 30,000 foot perspective.

Congratulations, Peg! What a great tribute to your work.



Peg Ogea-Ginsburg (center) receives the Above and Beyond Award

Don't Wait for Motivation to come to you

“What do you mean I have to wait for someone’s approval? I’m someone. I approve. So I give myself permission to move forward with my full support.”

Richelle E. Goodrich

By Richard Mettler,
Human Resources



Genuine, lasting motivation at work is not the kind of thing that others can provide to us. Motivation is something that happens to us when we do our part to set the stage for this.

Don't expect to wake up one morning and have a wave of motivation hit you. Motivation comes from accomplishment—by getting work done and doing it well. When we're productive and pleased with our efforts and accomplishments at work we feel satisfied. We are motivated then to feel this workplace satisfaction again. The reality is that we must work our way to motivation.

Things you can do to Self-Motivate:

- Keep your priorities and goals in front of you, and work with them in mind every day. Don't wait for motivation to push you forward. Allow your work to pull you toward the future, and motivation will follow.
- Work with a sense of urgency, with a bias for taking action.
- Keep the big picture in mind. Remember your important role in the DHHS mission, Helping People Live better Lives.
- Give yourself credit for your successes, accomplishments, and the added value you bring to DHHS.

- Remind yourself of why you work. Beside the pay and benefits, it is often about feeling alive, useful, and connected to others in meaningful work as you help make a positive difference in the world.
- Maintain daily contact with positive, motivated co-workers. Reach out to these people as a peer support network. Sometimes all it takes is a brief, informal conversation with a cheerful and optimistic co-worker to recharge your batteries.
- Assist, support, and encourage others to self-motivate. Be a motivation mentor for co-workers.
- Keep a healthy perspective on what's important in your work—the real work—and let go of minor periodic annoyances that will be forgotten soon enough anyway.



“Make the most of yourself...for that is all there is of you.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Please e-mail me your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationship at: Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov. I will e-mail you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your thoughts, concerns, or questions in a future column.

Insurance Reminder

Reminder: Open Enrollment for the State's insurance benefits is this month. During Open Enrollment, you will elect your benefits which will be effective July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017.

Open Enrollment

Begins on Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at 8 a.m. CST

Closes on Wednesday, May 25, 2016 at 5 p.m. CST

Employees will log in to the Employee Work Center (EWC) to review, elect, and change your benefits during Open Enrollment. An instructional user guide will also be posted on www.link.nebraska.gov.

To help you prepare, the 2016-17 Employee Options Guide and 2016 Open Enrollment flier is now available on our [website](#). These documents contain the information you need to make the right benefit choices during Open Enrollment.

A few important things for you to know:

- This is a Passive Open Enrollment. What this means to you:
 - o If you are currently enrolled in medical, dental, and vision insurance; your same coverage will continue for the next plan year, July 2016 through June 2017. Your coverage will be prepopulated during Open Enrollment. **You must still review the information and accept it all.**
 - **Wellness Health Plan** – If you are currently enrolled, and did not meet the requirements for the 2016-17 Wellness Health Plan, your coverage will end June 30, 2016. You will need to elect either the Regular Plan or Consumer Focused Health plan during Open Enrollment. If you do not, you will not have health insurance for the next plan year.
 - o **ALL** Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA) and Health Savings Accounts (HSA) deductions end June 30, 2016.
 - If you wish to enroll in a FSA for 2016-17, you must re-enroll during Open Enrollment.
 - You may restart your HSA during Open Enrollment, or anytime throughout the plan year as long as you continue to be enrolled on the Consumer Focused Health Plan.

Celebrate our EMS Professionals During EMS Week

May 15-21 is the 42nd annual National EMS week. This week celebrates EMS practitioners and the important work that they do in our communities. Our DHHS EMS staff provide support and services for the state's EMS responders. Across the state, Nebraska's EMS workers are the embodiment of the DHHS mission of helping people live better lives. They work around the clock to help save lives by responding to medical emergencies including things like heart attacks, accidents, drug overdoses, and strokes. They give care in the field and en route to the hospital. They provide comfort and compassion to their patients in their most difficult moments.

The EMS Program at DHHS provides support for the seven geographical regions of Nebraska. They work with all of the emergency workers across the state to give them technical assistance, continuing education, equipment, quality assurance guidelines and training. They also coordinate our statewide Trauma System. That system makes

giving care in traumas more cost effective, and helps caregivers provide optimal care for the victim. There are four regions in Nebraska that the team oversees.

As we celebrate EMS week, we'd like to introduce you to our new EMS/Trauma Program Manager Tim Wilson. Tim comes to us most recently from Phelps Memorial Community Hospital where he was a full time paramedic. Prior to that, he worked in the IT field doing training, consulting, and program management. Tim has been involved in EMS for the past ten years and says that he enjoys that his new position takes all of his skills and education and combines them into this new job. Welcome aboard Tim! The mission of the Emergency Medical Services program is to strengthen emergency care through cooperative partnerships and to promote the well-being of the citizens of Nebraska.

Someone from the team is usually available around the clock to help out when the need arises. Tim Wilson tells me that a good portion of their job is helping EMS workers deal with their

feelings and the stresses of the job after something significant happens in the field like the death of a child.

DHHS also licenses Emergency Medical professions and Paramedics as out-of-hospital emergency care providers.

Across the state, about 430 licensed ambulance services give life-saving emergency medical care at a moment's notice. When EMS workers are on the scene they give Basic Life Support or Advanced Life Support to their patients. Here at DHHS, we are grateful for the opportunity to serve and support these workers.

National EMS Week gives us the opportunity to publically recognize all the contributions that these unsung workers make. Given the challenges facing our nation's healthcare system, and the rapidly changing environment; we just want to give a shout out to all the emergency medical services workers in Nebraska. We thank you for what you do every day to help Nebraskans live better lives.

Nurses Week

National Nurses Week begins each year on May 6th and ends on May 12, Florence Nightingale's birthday. This week honors and recognizes the hard work of all of our nation's nurses. Here at DHHS, we want to celebrate all of the nurses who work in our divisions. Our theme this year is "Health in All Place." It's a fitting theme for a department that has nurses working in offices and facilities across the entire state!

To celebrate, we will have a proclamation signing at the State Capitol, opportunities for continuing education, and we'll finish the week with a birthday celebration and reception! Hope you can join us!



May 15 - 21 is the
42nd Annual National EMS Week
Celebrate EMS practitioners

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.

Dear **Energy Assistance**,

I want to thank you for all the help you give me. I used to be able to work and I don't know what I would do without your help. Again, I am truly grateful and I want you all to know that you are appreciated.

Thank you and Blessings,

**Susan
Omaha, NE**

Dear **Davina Cerveney (Social Services Worker)**

Awesome! Thank you so much! Is there any way I could tell your supervisor how amazing you are? You've gone above and beyond any other employee I've interacted with in the past! Thank you thank you thank you!!!

Courtney

Congrats **Steve Jackson (Health Program Manager)** on receiving the 2016 American Cancer Society - Cancer Action Network "Service to Advocacy" Volunteer of the Year Award for outstanding support in the fight against cancer. This award is well deserved; your devotion to eliminating cancer is amazing. Thank you for organizing breast cancer walks and donation drives for research. Your contribution to childhood cancer awareness keeps the memory of your grandson alive!

Jude Dean (DHHS Program Specialist)

Just wanted to let you both know how impressed and appreciative my Kearney board is of **Sonia Coates (Child/Family Services Specialist)**. Every time she comes to our meetings she is prepared and knowledgeable of her cases and is very kind and respectful. It is very evident that she cares for all of the children and families on her case load and she is always fighting for their best interests.

The Board has signed a thank-you card for Sonia but I wanted you to be aware that we think she is doing an awesome job.

Crystal L'Heureux (Foster Care Review Office)

I attended the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity Conference at Kearney and I must share with you that of all the Minority Health conferences I have attended in the last two decades, this was the best. The organization was supreme and the contents and speakers were very professional and very relevant to the theme of the conference which was Practice, Research and Partnerships. Kudos to the staff, Josie, Janelle, and the Conference Committee.

Anne Yu Buettner (Marriage and Family Therapist)