

CONNECTIONS

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

Highlighting “About DHHS” Webpage

Looking for contact information for a unit manager or service area administrator? Searching for a local office address or phone number? Not sure what division a particular unit or section falls under? “[About DHHS](#)” answers these questions and more. You’ll find the link on the left side of the homepage on the public website. Click on it for...

- [Administrative Contacts](#)

- [Office and Facility Locations by County](#)
- [DHHS-related Service Maps](#)
- [Organizational Structure](#)

New organizational charts have been developed for DHHS. They include the CEO’s office, all six Divisions and Operations. These charts are up to date and interactive.

They link to websites when available. The descriptions are

brief on purpose. They may not include every area a supervisor is responsible for, but information the public is most likely to ask about.

Aishah Witte,

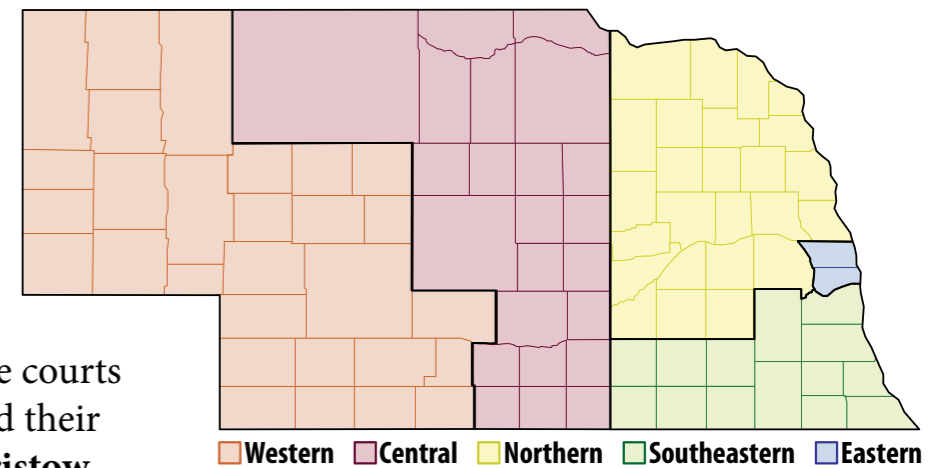
Communications and Legislative Services, created the new organizational charts and is responsible for keeping them current. See something that needs to be changed? Let her know: Aishah.witte@nebraska.gov or 402-471-9108.

CFS Service Areas Change in Response to LB 961

Fifteen counties will change to a different service area in the Children and Family Services Division on July 1, to meet the requirements of LB 961.

The change aligns service areas with district court judicial districts to help provide clarity and enhance CFS’ ability to work more efficiently with the courts and improve outcomes for children and their families, said CFS Director **Thomas Pristow**.

Most families will see no change in service. “Our priority will be to make this change seamless for our families,” he said. The current work location of employees will not change at this time.



Stay Connected on



make the connection . . .

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

Chief Executive Officer: Kerry Winterer	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Vivianne Chaumont
Behavioral Health Division Director: Scot Adams, Ph.D.	Public Health Division Director/ Chief Medical Officer: Dr. Joann Schaefer
Children and Family Services Division Director: Thomas Pristow	Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: Jodi Fenner	Chief Operating Officer: Matt Clough

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Homepage Homeruns

DHHS Employee Website . . . A DHHS Employee Exclusive

Looking for information that only DHHS employees can see? Try the [DHHS employee website](#). We add new information and photos every day, things that are relevant to you and the work you do.

Here are some recent posts on the DHHS employee website and the dates they appeared. Like what you're seeing and reading? Then check out the employee homepage every day! Got an idea or a photo you'd like to share for the employee homepage or *Connections*? Send it to Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov.

DHHS Celebrates National Volunteer Week, April 20, 2012

*By Joanne Badura, Volunteer
Coordinator, GIVH*

Volunteers are vital to the quality of care and services that are provided within all communities.

Whether one volunteers

for a few hours a month, or numerous hours a week, we wish to thank all volunteers for the contributions they make.

Volunteers certainly have special hearts and those of us on the receiving end of their kindness know our facilities are truly blessed.

This photo was taken at the Grand Island Veterans Home Volunteer Recognition Party on April 14, 2012. Michael Walker, vintage vocalist from Omaha, sang a praise of appreciation to a special volunteer. **Alex Willford**, GIVH administrator, (center) with his wife Jennifer (in red) enjoy the music.

To learn more about DHHS' volunteer program, visit: www.dhhs.ne.gov/volunteers

Unique Gifts Now Available at New BSDC Store, May 5, 2012

Are you looking for a special gift? Then come to the Bear Creek Gift Shop on the Beatrice State Development Center (BSDC) campus.

The gift items are created by the people who live at one of the intermediate care facilities at BSDC. The individuals are involved from start to finish. They gather and prepare the materials,

do the prep work to get the materials ready, create the art work, and work in the shop where the products are sold. The individuals are paid out of the proceeds from the sales. The type of items for sale includes candles, slumped bottles, art pieces, wood products and much more. Currently 20 people work in the production area under the direction of **Pat Sookram**, artistic and creative director for the shop.

The gift shop is located at 202 Sheridan St., Beatrice, Nebraska (BSDC Campus) and will be open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Celebrate Bike Month. Have Fun and Get in Shape, May 10, 2012

National Bike Month is an opportunity to celebrate the unique power of the bicycle and the many reasons we ride. Whether you bike: to work or school; to save money or time; to preserve your health or the environment; to explore your community; or, to get to your destination, get involved in Bike Month in your city or state — and encourage others to ride, too!

Here's a [great resource](#) from the League of American Bicyclists. It's a booklet with information about the benefits of riding, the best bike for the job, the rules of the road, and caring for your "engine," your body.



The Good Life: A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans



Kerry Winterer

Photo: Bill Wiley

By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

We asked and you responded – and we received 2,760 completed employee surveys for a 43% return. Thank you to everyone who responded and also to those who added comments.

Why do we do an employee survey? Because it gives us important insight into our organization:

- The results are a barometer of how we're doing overall as an organization. They can help us make adjustments so we do a better job of achieving our mission – helping people live better lives.
- It lets us hear directly from you in a confidential way. While we get aggregate information about

- specific areas in the agency, the responses aren't identified as yours.
- The more annual surveys we do, the more able we are to identify trends. What are our strengths and where do we need to improve? Are there areas where things are going so well that we can learn from them?

But the fundamental reason is that the Department, more than anything else, is our employees – and their attitudes and well-being are critical to our success in fulfilling our mission and helping others. The survey gives us a window into the attitudes and feelings of you, our employees.

The challenge with any survey is more than just the mechanics of designing questions and obtaining answers. It is using the results in a meaningful way. This will require some study on our part, and I have asked the division directors to look at the results in his or her division and collaborate with division staff and each other to come up with ways the survey results can be used to help their employees in doing their jobs.

There were some significant additions from the prior two years' surveys:

- For the first time the survey asked for years of service. What we can tell overall is that employees who are with the agency for one year or less were more in agreement with the statements than longer term employees.
- Also for the first time, the survey asked if the responder is a supervisor. The results show supervisors are more in agreement with the statements than non-supervisors.

On a final note, the number of responses decreased between the first and second survey, from 3,530 in 2009 to 2,275 in 2011. I'm very pleased to see the increase this year to 2,760 employees participating.

Thanks, again, to those who responded; your opinions are important. And thanks for the important work all of you do every day to help people live better lives.

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DHHS Bills Passed Into Law This Session

By Bryson Bartels,
Legislative Coordinator

The following bills introduced at the request of DHHS were passed into law during the 2012 Legislative Session. This was the second year of the two-year legislative cycle. The name in parentheses is the state senator or committee introducing the legislation on DHHS' behalf.

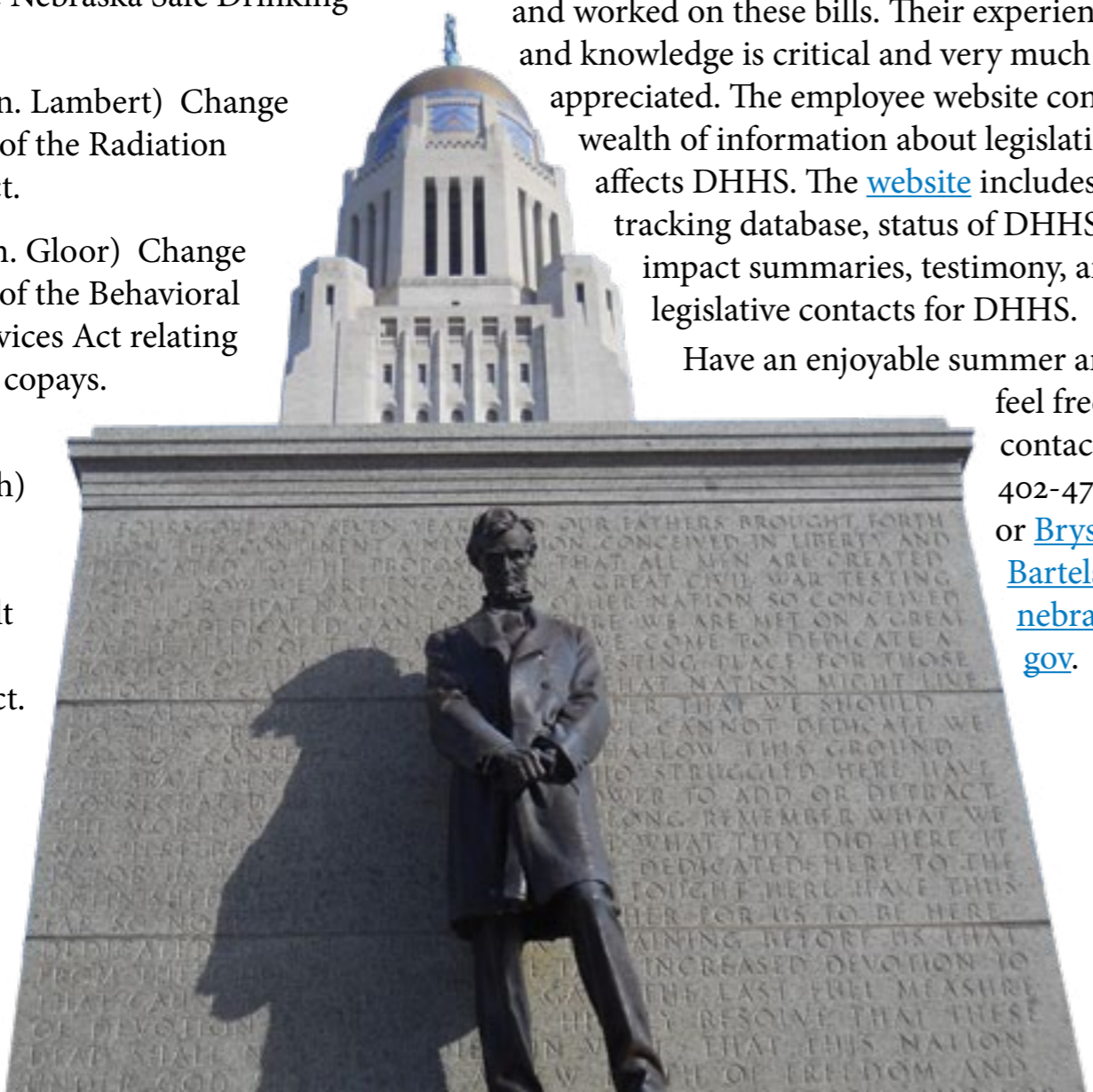
- LB 723 (Sen. Bloomfield) Change defined term to the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act.
- LB 794 (Sen. Lambert) Change provisions of the Radiation Control Act.
- LB 871 (Sen. Gloor) Change provisions of the Behavioral Health Services Act relating to fees and copays.
- LB 1051 (Sen. Coash) Change provisions of the Adult Protective Services Act.

The following DHHS bills from the past two years did not pass into law:

- LB 242 (Hadley) Change assault provisions on Youth and Rehabilitation Treatment Center employees.
- LB 456 (Health and Human Services Committee) Provide technical changes relating to Medicaid, communicable diseases, SNAP, and certain councils and commissions.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all Department staff who provided information and worked on these bills. Their experience and knowledge is critical and very much appreciated. The employee website contains a wealth of information about legislation that affects DHHS. The [website](#) includes a bill tracking database, status of DHHS bills, impact summaries, testimony, and key legislative contacts for DHHS.

Have an enjoyable summer and feel free to contact me at 402-471-0541 or Bryson.Bartels@nebraska.gov.



My foods. My fitness. My health. Keep Your Health On Track with SuperTracker.

Here's a free and easy way to track what you eat and how much you exercise. It's called "SuperTracker," and it's an [online tracking tool](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Here are some of the features...

- Sample meal plans... show just a few ways to combine meals and snacks to meet your daily food group targets.
- Food-A-Pedia...lets you look up nutrition info for more than 8,000 foods. You can also choose and compare two foods side-by-side.
- My Reports...keeps track of your food, nutrient, and physical activity trends over time to help

you achieve food and activity goals. Use reports to see where you're meeting your goals and identify areas you'd like to work on.

- Personalize your experience by creating your profile, and get a plan tailored for you.

SuperTracker... just another tool to help you live healthy!

UNK Athlete Shares Personal Story with YRTC-K Grads at May Ceremony

By Betty (Janie) Bower-Hansen, Teacher, West Kearney High School, YRTC- K



The usual path for a standout athlete and all-American honoree like Marty Molina is high academic achievement and athletic performance in high school. For Marty, though, that path instead led him through court, jail, halfway houses and rehabilitation clinics.

Marty shared the story of his struggle to overcome drugs and alcohol in high school as the keynote speaker for the GED (General Educational Development) graduation ceremony at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Kearney on May 4, 2012.

Marty talked about the loss of family, of trust, and the loneliness of sitting in a jail cell on Christmas Day when his family was a short distance away, at home, celebrating both his parents' birthdays and

Christmas with gift opening, laughter, and dinner together. It was this loss that really sunk into his heart and mind.

Marty said he decided that he didn't like the shame he felt over missing out on his family and his life, so when he got out of jail, he pursued a 12-step program, moved into a halfway house, and got a job.

In August 2008, Marty enrolled at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Since then, Marty has earned four All-American honors, done well with his collegiate studies, and hopes to graduate soon and work in the social justice field, particularly with juveniles.

The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center-Kearney has a graduation ceremony once a month to celebrate the success of the GED program. In 2010-11, there were 46 GED graduates. There were 10 GED graduation programs, each with a keynote speaker to congratulate the graduates and share thoughts and support. GED graduates invite family members to the graduation ceremony to celebrate each youth's success, listen to the speaker, take photos, and then enjoy cake and punch.

There have been 36 GED graduates so far in FY 2011-2012.

Sharing News and a Passion for Post-Its. 1,000 Employee Bulletins and Counting!

Employee Bulletin Board



Since we launched our new and improved employee website on Aug. 15, 2011, you've written more than 1,000 bulletins for the bulletin board. That's 1,000 Post-it notes full of congratulations and good wishes, motivational quotes, recognition for coworkers, welcomes to new employees, and thank yous.

Bulletins are a great way to get information to your co-workers across the state.

Want to use the bulletin board? It's easy! Here's how:

- Scroll down and click "Add a Bulletin."
- Type your text using the guidelines at <http://dhhsemployees/Pages/CommentGuidelines.aspx>
- Hit "Save" and wait for your note to be published.



Elder Abuse is a World Issue. Know the Warning Signs. Speak Up!

By Russ Reno

Vulnerable adults in every zip code in Nebraska live in silent fear because of financial exploitation, neglect and physical and emotional abuse. Adult Protective Services (APS) and the DHHS State Unit on Aging are targeting June 15, which is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, to inform the public what to do about it.

“Not only is this a Nebraska issue, but it’s a world issue,” said **Julie Hippen**, CFS program coordinator. “That’s why we’re joining this world-wide observance for the second year through local and state promotional efforts.”

She said a number of events were held last year in the area offices on aging and she expects there to be even more this year as the observance gains a foothold in Nebraska.

“We’ve provided information about many ways to inform communities about elder abuse from presentations to open houses, awards, proclamations and other promotional efforts,” Hippen said. “We hope to continue to build awareness of the signs of abuse and who to call.”

She said the warning signs of elder or vulnerable adult abuse are:

- Sudden changes in behavior or finances.
- Physical injuries, dehydration or malnourishment.
- Extreme withdrawal, depression or anxiety.
- Absence of basic care or necessities.
- Kept away from others.
- Unsanitary living conditions.
- Personal items missing.

“These warning signs spell ‘speak up,’ and we will ask Nebraskans to speak up for their relatives, neighbors and friends who may be too fearful to do it for themselves,” Hippen said. “We want citizens to know they can call 1-800-652-1999 anonymously to possibly help prevent abuse.”

The programs have lined up a number of promotional efforts to get the word out to the state’s citizens, including the following promotional pieces that will be distributed to area offices on aging, the Ombudsmen located there and the DHHS State Unit on Aging:

- Business-sized cards, bookmarks and brochures listing the warning

signs of abuse and information about the hotline. In addition, bookmarks will be sent to every library in the state.

- Posters promoting World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- A fact sheet that discusses the abuse of vulnerable adults and offers tips to stop or prevent abuse.
- News media also will receive information to help with the cause:
- Radio and TV public service announcements will be produced and

distributed. Some placement has been arranged on NET and KOLN-TV’s My TV.

- A news release will be sent prior to June 15th noting the observance accompanied by column filler ads that newspapers may use.

In addition, the Area Offices on Aging, the Ombudsmen and the State Unit on Aging have received a Community Guide Tool Kit containing activity ideas, information about involving the news media, a sample local news release, a list of all news media in each area and background information on the abuse of vulnerable adults to use in presentations.



Larsen's Newspaper Keeps Seniors In the Know

Many of us know **Keith Larsen** (Business Analyst, Information Systems and Technology) from Microsoft Outlook and Communicator training sessions. His work at DHHS has always involved improving communication in some way or another. What you may not know is Keith enjoys communicating outside DHHS, as well. In 2006, at age 55, he bought a publishing business and now creates a newspaper dedicated to bringing uplifting stories, useful information and humor to a senior audience.

The Lincoln 55+ Seniors Paper is a full-sized, 32-page quarterly newspaper with a circulation of 16,000 copies. Keith's evenings and weekends are filled with email communication, editing stories, delivering papers and everything needed to run a business.

Topics for the paper include antiques, advice, adventure, Lincoln history, folklore, genealogy, pets and stories about life in days gone by. The

Lincoln Artist Guild submits a full page art collage for every issue and Keith's wife, Barbara, collects details from the internet for a four-page calendar of events section.

Keith says he loves the aspect of communicating with so many people through the paper. He enjoys reviewing all the topics for seniors and selecting the best stories to publish. "It's like having a megaphone and hoping people

like what you say." His website www.Lincoln55plus.com offers online access to past issues.

Keith admits that his newspaper could not succeed without the writers who submit columns for every issue. "Their stories are the heart of the newspaper."

.....
Employee stories are the heart of *Connections*, as well, which is why we continue to ask for articles, photos and story ideas. DHHS is a big organization. We want to represent the work you do. Keep us posted!



Happenings!

"Hiring Our Heroes" Career Fair

DHHS human resources officer **Carolyn Stuczynski** and others represented DHHS at the "Hiring Our Heroes" Career Fair at the Lancaster Event Center in Lincoln on April 24. Norfolk Veterans' Home Building Services Manager **Kim Davis** and H.R. recruiters **Maggie McPherson** and **Lisa Holz** were at the event as well. There were 109 employers with more than 500 job opportunities all in one place, with 300 veterans registered to attend. More than a dozen sponsors including military groups and media partners worked to make the event a success.

"This is about bringing Nebraska's employers and service members, and their spouses, together in an

environment that creates opportunities for both groups," said Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Nebraska Adjutant General, in a [recent news release](#). "Nebraska's service members bring tremendous skill sets and qualities with them. Our Guardsmen and women, for example, have honed skills like leadership, problem-solving, an ability to operate under pressure, time management, and many others. These are abilities that our employers are looking for today."



Carolyn Stuczynski, Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home Photo: Maggie McPherson

In Gratitude

Letters to DHHS employees who are *helping people live better lives*

Michaela Stamm (Service Coordinator, Developmental Disabilities, Omaha) received an e-mail from a parent of a person she works with. It said, in part...

I can honestly say this is the most at ease he and I have felt regarding his services and that is due to all you have done for us. Thanks again for all you have done for our family.

A Grateful Parent

Rageana Harris (Community Support Specialist, Southeast Service Area),

I was just talking with my staff about ACCESSNebraska. They said how responsive and helpful you have been. They also said a couple times they called they had no wait time and that, in general, wait time was down. Also, they really thought that the refugee case managers were great.

Center for People in Need

Jill Schreck (Children and Family Services Administrator) added: This is a good opportunity to talk about a wonderful presentation by the Community Support Specialists at a recent ACCESSNebraska Team meeting. They outlined the work they have done and the number of people and organizations that they have had contact with. They are really making a big impact across the state. I would also like to point out that **Deb Steidley** (CSE Field Operations Administrator, Lincoln) has been working with the Community Support Specialists and her leadership has helped us make this positive impact.

Editor's Note: A youth recently discharged from the Hastings Juvenile Chemical Dependency Program at the Hastings Regional Center wrote the following note. It is written as it was presented in the actual letter.

Our thanks to **Corinne Jensen**, HRC, for sending us this letter.

To the team,

I know we been through our ups and our downs and our windows (LOL), but I just want to say that I really appreciate all that you all have done for me and I know that I say that I never learned anything here but that isn't completely true. I have learned that I can be successful without using my anger as a trump card. I have shown not only you all but myself that I can be productive and positive. And that I have the tools to succeed in life.

Since I have been here I have been able to look at problems that I didn't think were too serious and realize that they were and are something that will always be an obstacle in my life. I have met new people who have changed the way I do things for the better and I have matured. I still have a long life of triumphs and failures ahead but this will be one time in my life that I can say for sure that I have triumphed more than failed. I appreciate everything that everyone here at HRC has done for me. Now it is time for me to walk on my own and be a man. Thanks for everything.

A Grateful Client