

CONNECTIONS

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

'Safe Teen Driving Begins with You' Campaign Targets Parents of Teen Drivers

The “Driving the Right Message” campaign’s goal is to educate parents about the important role they play in keeping their teen safe at the wheel. Sponsored by DHHS, the campaign will reach parents through a variety of methods, including movie theater and gas pump topper ads, website ads and posters. The campaign’s logo includes a QR code that takes parents to the website which provides resources and tools about how to keep teen drivers safe.

With motor vehicle crashes being the leading cause of death for Nebraska’s teen drivers, parental involvement is crucial. Parents who are supportive and involved with their teen driver can lower their teen’s crash risk by 50 percent. Modeling safe driving practices such as always using a seat belt, no cell phone use and driving the speed limit also makes an impact.

Teen drivers with involved parents are:

- Twice as likely to use their seat belts;
- 70 percent less likely to drink and drive;

- Half as likely to speed;
- 30 percent less likely to use cell phones while driving; and
- Significantly less likely to drive with multiple passengers (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia).

“This campaign is another way to make a positive impact on teen-related crashes,” said **Courtney Phillips**, DHHS Chief Executive Officer. “By educating parents about their important role in teen driver safety, we are also helping teens become responsible, skilled drivers.”



“Parents play a key role, and when they talk to their teens about safe driving, they are helping to prevent car crashes. We hope that this campaign will spark a conversation between parents and their teen driver,” said **Judy Martin**, Deputy Director of Community and Environmental Health of DHHS.

For information about what works to keep teens safe at the wheel, visit the [“Driving the Right Message” website](#) or contact [Jeanne Bietz](#) at 402-471-0361.

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 DHHS also sponsors a program called **Teens in the Driver Seat**, which has been adopted by 14 schools across the state. With car crashes being the leading cause of death for Nebraska teens, this program can have a huge impact on schools and communities.

Teens in the Driver Seat is the nation’s first widespread, grassroots, peer-to-peer school-based program focused exclusively on teen driver safety. The program is designed to address both teen awareness and behavior by

turning peer pressure in a positive and productive direction. Teens in the Driver Seat focuses on the top five risks for teen drivers: night time driving; speeding; distractions; low seat belt use; and alcohol use.

Teens in the Driver Seat is supported by DHHS, AAA Nebraska, Nebraska Office of Highway Safety, Nebraska Safety Council and State Farm. For more information about the Teens in the Driver Seat program, visit [DHHS’ Injury Prevention website](#).



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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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| Children and Family Services Division Director: Doug Weinberg | Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert |
| Developmental Disabilities Division Acting Director: Courtney Miller | Chief Financial Officer: Pat Weber |

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[DHHS' Employee Website....](#)

New information and photos are added daily to the employee website. Here are some recent posts 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.

Homepage Homeruns

[Lincoln CSC Celebrates Anniversary, July 27](#)



Dress your Supervisor Day at the Lincoln Customer Service Center.

DHHS employees at the Lincoln Customer Service Center celebrated the Center's anniversary last week in a variety of fun ways with a variety of fun days. Lincoln CSC staff have named their anniversary celebration "Spirit Week." Spirit Week includes fun theme days and a CSC-wide picnic for employees and their families.

[Staff Help Adult Adoptee Find Info About Birth Parents, July 29](#)

Adoption information isn't just for children. This particular adult adoptee

was searching for information about her birth parents and brought cookies to thank staff for their help in securing a certified copy of her birth certificate.

The adoptee started her search for her birth parents' identity in 2013. Recently, she received a certified copy of her original birth certificate after the adoption search was closed.

She drove all the way from Bellevue to pickup her original birth certificate from DHHS' Vital Records bringing cookies with her as a thank you to Protection and Safety Program Specialist and Vital Records Adoptions for helping out in the search.

When a person is adopted, he or she can obtain a new birth certificate which states the adoptive parent's names in the place of the birth father and the birth mother. In Nebraska, adult adoptees adopted prior to Sept. 1, 1988, can only receive a copy of their original birth

certificate if their birth parents sign consent, or have passed away and verification can be obtained to confirm their death.

Chris Jones, Adoption Search Coordinator and Permanency Program Specialist, and **Brittany Ehly**, UNL intern, were able to get the necessary documents to release the record to this adult searcher who was only looking for "closure after all these years." This adoptee said earlier in the month, "if you get me my birth certificate, I will bake you cookies and I will drive them to Lincoln." She delivered on her promise!



Pictured from left: Brittany Ehly, adoptee, and Chris Jones.



Message from Courtney Phillips, CEO

offices and facilities across the state. We really gave the other teams a run for the money, literally!

For those who have attended any of my “meet and greet” staff meetings, you know that I’m all about having fun at work. Clearly I didn’t know who I was dealing with, because you all know how to have fun and help people at the same time by raising money for such a good cause.

Even though the Campaign is technically over, pledge cards and dollars raised are still coming in to the DHHS folks in Human Resources and to the Department of Administrative Services. Here are the DHHS totals as of Sept. 21 from DAS. Dollars raised \$139,289. Total Donors: 1,027.

No matter how you count it, that’s an impressive amount of money raised.

The state’s Charitable Giving Campaign is such a good idea because there are a lot of people right here in Nebraska who need our help. The money we raised and pledged stays in Nebraska and has immediate impact on the lives of our family, friends, coworkers and neighbors.

Since 2003, you and state employees from other agencies have raised more than \$4.6 million dollars to support 400+ charitable organizations throughout Nebraska. You’re such a

generous bunch of people!

Thank you for your tremendous efforts in raising and pledging money for Charitable Giving. Giving to this Campaign goes way above and beyond serving and helping people like we do in our work, and I truly believe that giving of ourselves is one of the most important things we can do in our lives.

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, here are some fun photos you may have missed from the employee website. If you want to read about some of the creative fundraisers that people hosted during the Charitable Giving Campaign, the employee website is the place to go.

There’s even a category in Neat to Know that’s just for Charitable Giving. Here’s the [link](#).



Dog vs. Cat: Envy the Therapy Dog is super beautiful as Bat Dog for super hero fund-raising day at the Lincoln Regional Center. This Grumpy Cat cat litter cake sold for \$33 at the Beatrice State Development Center’s cake auction fundraiser.



Folks at the Norfolk Veterans’ Home held a painting class as a fund-raising event. Participants choose between painting a flower or an initial letter. What great artists we have here!

Social Media, HIPAA and the Coffee Shop Test

By Brad Wildeman,
DHHS IT Security Analyst

How many times have you seen a news article or social media (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.) post about someone doing something and winding up in the hospital?

The first question in my mind is, “How did that person get information from the hospital?” Well, it’s pretty simple: A hospital staff member talks to someone else; whether it be a public relations person, agent, family member or a reporter.

A public figure’s health information or a private citizen’s mishandled medication or mistreatment “goes viral” on social media because someone wants the world to know what’s going on. That said, we need to understand that the content and context of the information, the person who released the information, to whom the information is released, and how the information is released all help determine whether or not HIPAA laws have been broken.¹

Social media is a blessing and a curse: It provides us with a medium to stay in contact with friends and relatives; it provides a way to air our concerns about whatever is the “issue of the day”; we use it share ideas, tips, recipes, and trades; and if the gossip is juicy enough (or not), can spread like wildfire to our friends, their friends, their friends’ friends, and so on: whether the information is true or not.²

Social media does not have a “Delete” feature: once something is posted out there, there’s no way to take it back; even if you try to remove the post: someone, somewhere has a copy.³

When we start posting information on social media about someone’s health information, to include their condition, medications, etc. in a social media open forum, we forget to take that person’s

privacy into consideration. I call social media an “open forum” because even if we share it with just our “friends,” there is no way of knowing who they may have shared the information with, or who can see their social media profile. We also tend to forget our obligation as covered entity employees to protect information, up to and including a patient’s rights under HIPAA when we post or re-post this type of information.



Before posting to a social media site, ask yourself some simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions: Is the information accurate? Do we know with whom we’re sharing information, and why we’re sharing? Have emotions such as anger or disgust clouded our judgment? Is the information something that should be shared publicly? Is it an issue that can (or should) be handled more discretely with appropriate authorities (Go back to my comment on social media being an ‘open forum’)? Does the law prohibit me from sharing this information?

Now, put yourself in the patient’s shoes for just a minute... What if YOU were that patient in the hospital bed, the psychiatrist’s chair, or the rehab center? Would you want YOUR personal information shared with the world, especially by someone YOU DON’T KNOW?

Psychologist Susan Giurleo tells us that we should “use the same ethics and confidentiality online that we would use in real life.” She calls it “The Coffee Shop Test.” -- If you wouldn’t talk about a situation with a colleague in a coffee shop, then it’s not appropriate to talk about it online.⁴

Next time you’re getting ready to post that blog: Stop. Take a deep breath. Re-read what you’ve typed. Then take “The Coffee Shop Test.” It may give you an entirely different outlook on what was just written before it gets posted for the world to see.

LawAtlas.org: A Detailed, Comprehensive Resource for Public Health

Which states ban texting while driving? What are the requirements in your state for keeping kids safe in cars?
How many states have laws to reduce harm from sports concussions?



David Presley, J.D., Temple University, (left) talks about LawAtlas.org with Darrell Klein, DHHS attorney, at a recent meeting of the Public Health Association of Nebraska .

Wouldn't it be great to be able to find the answers to these questions and more in one place? Now you can, thanks to the hard-work and dedication of people at DHHS who helped develop a unique, comprehensive resource.

[LawAtlas](#) tracks laws and regulations related to public health's core mission of keeping people safe and healthy. LawAtlas.org is the most comprehensive website for finding all the state-level laws and regulations related to public health, and it's a one-of-a-kind resource for researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and the public.

Staff at the Public Health Law Research (PHLR) and Temple University, helped develop LawAtlas. PHLR is a national

program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. DHHS employees **Darrell Klein**, Attorney III, and **Colleen Svoboda**, Community Health and Performance Management, worked with these national public health partners to help put this Nebraska-specific resource in place at <http://www.lawatlas.org/nebraska> .

"Nebraska is what drove this project forward," said Jennifer Ibrahim, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Temple University's College of Public Health. "Darrell and Colleen basically picked up the ball and ran with it."

LawAtlas.org is such a comprehensive resource of valuable legal information. Topics include: alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; chronic disease and injury; disabilities; disasters and emergencies; environmental health; foodborne illnesses; health professions licensure; maternal health, children and families; mental and behavioral health; and seniors and aging.

Even though basic information about public health laws and regulations is currently available on the internet, no one has pulled it all together and put it in one place quite like this until now,

said Jennifer. "It's cutting-edge to be able to store this type of information and make it accessible for all."

There are so many ways this resource can be useful to people, like tracking trends, researching facts and evaluating the effectiveness of programs. The data is available in real time and anyone can just click and get the information that's needed.

Jennifer said that they wanted to work with Nebraska because DHHS' Division of Public Health has developed an exceptionally close working relationship between management and legal support, as well as strong partnerships with medical and educational partners like the University of Nebraska Medical Center. "Nebraska has such a strong commitment to public health. We're modeling others projects after this one."

Darrell and Colleen recently presented information about LawAtlas at the Public Health Association of Nebraska earlier this month and will be offering their presentation again to participants at the American Public Health Association's annual meeting in Chicago in October.

Meet Pat Weber, DHHS Chief Financial Officer

Maybe you've seen him walking around in the State Office Building with boundless energy and a bright smile on his face. That's **Pat Weber**, DHHS' Chief Financial Officer.

Pat started working for DHHS July 20. As CFO, Pat is focusing on long-range financial planning, strategic leadership and continued improvement of our financial processes at DHHS as a whole and within divisions and programs.

It's a big job, and Pat has more than 25 years of extensive experience in corporate finance and leadership to handle it.

"When you've lived in a lot of different places, traveled as much as I have, and worked in a lot of different jobs, you appreciate everything you've been through and learn from it," said Pat. "All of the opportunities and past experiences I've had make me the person I am today." That person, Pat said, is fairly structured and disciplined.

"I'm typically an early riser," he said, "usually getting to the office around 7 to 7:30." Every day Pat said he prioritizes essential tasks, writes them on index cards and focuses on completing them. That's not to say that things don't happen along the way to try to disrupt his focus.

"This is a complex organization with a lot of moving parts," said Pat. "No two

days are alike. No two issues are alike."

Pat said one of his biggest challenges is learning all about DHHS because there is so much to learn. Another challenge? Pat said he wishes he could accomplish more in a day and give every job the attention it deserves.

"I learned from my father that every job

is important and deserves to be done well."

Although Pat currently calls Omaha "home," he has lived all over the country. He grew up in a small town in the middle of Michigan called St. Louis. Over the years Pat has worked and lived in several places all across the country including Minnesota, California, Tennessee and Florida, where he became the avid boater that he is.

Pat found his way to Nebraska when one of his best childhood friends became the COO of TD Ameritrade and wanted Pat to work with him there. Pat said he moved to Omaha in April 2014 and started working for TD Ameritrade where he met Felix Davidson. Felix is the Chief Operating Officer for Gov. Pete Ricketts, which led Pat to consider another opportunity, this time in state government.

Pat said he joined state government and this administration as an opportunity to make a

difference in the lives of Nebraskans.

"I met Courtney, and we hit it off right away," said Pat. "I like how she approaches her day and was impressed with what she wanted to accomplish in a short time."

Pat said that so far at DHHS, he is most impressed with all the "terrific" people who work here. "We have a tremendous foundation in terms of talent and dedication. Financial Services touches all aspects of what we're doing here. The better we do our jobs, the better we can support the agency. It's a great opportunity to help everyone in the agency."

Outside of work, Pat and Marylou, his wife, share another passion. They are both happily and heavily involved in the dog rescue world. "Marylou and I have personally saved more than 670 dogs from kill shelters. 650 of those dog came directly through our house as we worked to find different homes for them. We genuinely love dogs and have four ourselves."

As Pat said earlier, all of his past work and life experiences including his special connection and calling to watch over rescue dogs, makes him the person he is today. That person is DHHS' "go to" guy for financial services and information. The exact right person and right fit for the job!



Pat Weber enjoys a beautiful day in Key West, Florida.

Ensure that People Hear What You Say

“It was impossible to get a conversation going, everyone was talking too much.” Yogi Berra

By Richard Mettler,
Human Resources



Poor communication is a common complaint in all organizations. Communication misfires at work cause problems wherever they occur, including confusion, frustration, and stressed workplace relationships.

There are simple proven techniques for people to speak more effectively, for the listener’s understanding.

First and foremost, be a good listener yourself. The single most effective way to get someone’s attention is to listen politely for understanding when the other person speaks. People commonly want to hear what a person who seems interested in them has to say.

Be organized in what you want the listener to hear.

- Be clear beforehand on the key points that you want to get across. When speaking to a group there is nothing

wrong with having your talking points written down as reminders.

- Cut to the chase. State the main point or conclusion first. Next, state your reasons for this main point or conclusion as is helpful.
- Communicate one thought at a time. Make it easy for the listener to follow you.

Be aware of your delivery.

- Speak more slowly with higher volume than usual.
- Maintain a calm, inviting tone in your voice that is congruent with your overall demeanor—a friendly facial expression, relaxed body posture, good eye contact.

Ensure that you and the listener are on the same page.

- Beware of unspoken assumptions that you’re bringing to the conversation. Work to ensure that you and the listener are sharing important assumptions and background information.

- Always invite questions for clarification.

Very selectively, you can ‘signpost’.

- You can weave in something like: “What I’m going to say next is extremely important.” or “This is the main thing that I want to get across.”

Confirm that the listener heard what you intended.

- Ask the listener to state the main points of what you said. You might say, “I want to be sure that I made sense to you just now. Please tell me your takeaway from what I said.” Never interrupt the listener when giving you this feedback. If you want someone to listen respectfully to you, demonstrate this same courtesy in your listening.

Finally, ask coworkers for feedback on your spoken communication, and what you can do to be more effective.

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Please email your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships to [Richard Mettler](#). I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your ideas in a future column.

DHHS’ Office of Health Disparities, Health Equity Receives Grant to Help Reduce Diabetes Among American Indians in NE

Josie Rodriguez, Administrator, DHHS Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity, writes...

I would like to give a big thank you to **Anthony Zhang, Diane Lowe, Blanca Ramirez-Salazar, and Jessie Perez** for the hard work they put into grant application that was recently awarded to our office in the amount of \$987,769.

The State Partnership Grant Initiative Award is for approximately \$198,000 per year for a total of five years and will work to reduce the diabetes rates among American Indians in Thurston County, Nebraska. Numerous hours were put into planning and assisting with the application process. Thank you so much for your hard work.



“People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.” John C. Maxwell

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.

Bette Westerfield (Case aide, Omaha),

Today you were—*are!*—an angel to me. Today for me, here in the DHHS office, you proved that it's really above and beyond just doing a job. You've done so much for me – a stranger to you, needing real and immediate assistance! The use of your phone to contact churches for help, etc. was appreciated. As were your printouts for food pantries close to my apartment. You went above and beyond helping me get my SNAP renewal submitted. You have been a blessing to me.

A Thankful Client



Jennifer Jennings (Certified Master Social Worker Supervisor, Lincoln Regional Center),

Our son was in your facility until his transfer to Community Transitions. His caseworker, once he got to building 10, was **Ann Alberico** (Certified Master Social Worker, LRC). I just wanted you to know what a blessing Ann was to us. We have nothing but praise and respect for this woman's professionalism, caring and support. From the beginning of this difficult situation Ann was kind and knowledgeable. She responded promptly to phone calls and emails.

I can't tell you how much this meant to us. Like many others, we have experienced a lot (understatement!) dealing with our son's mental illness. It was so refreshing to work with someone like Ann. She is a special woman and the light we needed to continue this journey.

A Grateful Parent

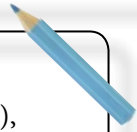


Dear **Karen Parde** (Refugee Program Coordinator, Lincoln),

It was a pleasure to speak with you during 2015 World Refugee Day.

I was honored to be a part of such a memorable experience. It is evident that you and your colleagues offer an extraordinary support system to refugees in our state. The compassion and dedication you show to each of them is appreciated. Thank you for all that you do to support these individuals.

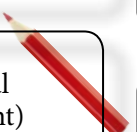
Sincerely,
Deb Fischer, U.S. Senate



Hi **Debra Nielsen** (Social Services Worker, Fremont)

A client came into our office wanting to thank you for the LIHEAP program you approved him for. He called Black Hills to pay his bill and was told he didn't owe anything this month. You made him very happy. Thank you

Patrick Phelps (Social Services Worker, Wahoo)

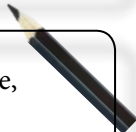


Elizabeth Davila (Social Services Worker, Medicaid and Long Term Care, Omaha)

I spoke with someone who told me how helpful you have been to my wife and her application for renewal of her medical assistance. I have worked in state government in both Nebraska and Illinois and I know that sometimes we did not get much appreciation for the hard work we did.

I want to express my sincere appreciation to you. I know that often the funding of our state agencies is such that the workers have to work hard just to keep up with the demands of their jobs. But I know how dedicated workers such as you are and how much effort and emotional investment you put into your work.

Sincerely, **Grateful Spouse of a Client**



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