

CONNECTIONS

April 2015

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 4

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

Choose Insurance that Fits Your Needs! Open Enrollment Starts May 6, Ends May 20

Open Enrollment starts May 6—Time to think about benefits and choose the plans that fit your needs. This year's Open Enrollment begins Wednesday, May 6, at 8 a.m. CST and runs through Wednesday, May 20 at 5 p.m. CST.

Detailed information on benefit plans, changes for the next year, and new premium rates are available on the [State Employee Wellness & Benefits homepage](#).

Current health, dental, vision, and flexible spending account (FSA) benefits do not automatically carry over to the next plan year. If you do not choose benefits during Open Enrollment, you will not have these benefits beginning July 1, 2015.

Employee Wellness & Benefits Specialists have traveled to several locations across the state to answer questions about employee benefits. The last Open Enrollment Information Booth will be available Tuesday, May 5, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Nebraska State Office Building in Lincoln.

2015-16 Options Benefits Guide

Where do you go for a comprehensive look at the state's insurance/benefits packages available through Open Enrollment? The [2015-16 Options Benefits Guide](#) from the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services is now available online.

The guide does a good job of providing summarized and easy-to-understand information about our insurance plans.

On page 5-6 of the Options Guide, you will find important information about Open Enrollment and changes to benefits for the plan year beginning July 1, 2016.

When it comes to healthcare, the Options Guide lists additional tools available through the state's vendor, UnitedHealthcare. Tools to help estimate costs, find providers and help you act as a good consumer of healthcare. These tools and the [myuhc.com website](#) or app are outlined on page 21 of the guide.

The Health Care Plan Comparison chart (pages 28-29 of the guide) compares the plans side-by-side so everyone can easily see the deductibles, co-pays and co-insurance amounts for the major services (preventive care, hospital services, physician office visits, etc.).

Want to know what the new premiums are? They are listed on page 30 of the guide.

Employee Work Center

Each year you will complete Open Enrollment for benefits through the Employee Work Center (EWC) found at [www.link.nebraska.gov](#). Using the EWC, you will elect, view and make changes to your benefit plan choices. You can also update your dependent and beneficiary information, your emergency contacts, and your personal contact information.

Health care is often one of a family's major household expenses making insurance plans and coverage a major decision. Only you know what types of medical services you may need, which doctors you want to use, and how much you can afford to spend on your health care needs. That means that only you can determine which plan is best for you and your family.

Please take time to read and understand the choices that impact you and your family.



Stay Connected on



make the connection . . .

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

Chief Executive Officer: Courtney Phillips	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: Calder Lynch
Behavioral Health Division Acting Director: Sheri Dawson	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: Dr. Joseph Acierno
Children and Family Services Division Acting Director: Tony Green	Veterans' Homes Division Director: John Hilgert
Developmental Disabilities Division Acting Director: Jodi Fenner	Chief Operating Officer: Matt Clough

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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

DHHS EMS Program Receives \$6 Million Grant to Help Save the Lives of Nebraskans, April 16, 2015



From left: **Dean Cole**, DHHS Emergency Medical Services program manager; Shelley Stingley, Helmsley Foundation; Chief Brian Daake, Beatrice Fire and Rescue, and **Dr. Don Rice**, statewide physician medical director, DHHS EMS program, with CPR device.

Nebraska received a grant of almost \$6 million from the Helmsley Charitable Trust Foundation that will be used to purchase lifesaving equipment for ambulances and hospitals to increase the chances of survival for Nebraskans having heart attacks.

"This grant represents another significant investment in Nebraska's cardiac care system," said Lt. Gov. Mike Foley.

"Seconds count when someone is having a heart attack and timely care and treatment can mean the difference

between life and death. With advanced equipment and strong cardiac care systems in place, more lives can be saved," said **Dr. Joseph Acierno**, director of DHHS' Public Health.

Approximately 360 ambulance services and 80 hospitals in Nebraska will receive the Physio-Control LUCAS® 2 chest compression system, an external, mechanical device that provides automated chest compressions to an adult in cardiac arrest.

As part of this three-year grant, DHHS' Emergency Medical Services program will help coordinate purchase and distribution of the devices as well as the appropriate training.

Donation of iPods Lets ENVH Members Enjoy Favorite Tunes, April 10, 2015



Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home member Louis Garrod (pictured below, left) enjoys his favorite tunes thanks to a recent donation of iPod Shuffles. *Photo: Audrey Hester*

From the April 2015 issue of the Eagle, an [ENVH](#) newsletter.

The Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home Activities Department continues to work hard to bring new programs to members. In his monthly column, ENVH Administrator **Troy Schulz** writes...

"Most recently, the Eastern Nebraska Veterans' Home (ENVH) became certified in the Music and Memory program, becoming one of ten nursing homes in Nebraska certified. In support of the Music and Memory program, Bellevue University and the Military Order of the Purple Heart have donated monetarily to support the program. Most recently, Cargill, Inc., located in Blair, Nebraska, donated 60 iPod Shuffles to our members.

On any given day at ENVH, you can see many members listening to music. The Allegiance neighborhood has seen members that are typically quiet all of sudden become vocal and begin to move with the music. Thank you to our supporters for providing the tool to deliver this great therapy to our members. A special thanks to **Sarah Ryan**, Activity Supervisor, and her staff for learning about the benefits of this program and for bringing it to our members."

Positive Communications: a Core Competency and Essential to the Success of Any Organization



Courtney Phillips, CEO

One of the things that immediately impressed me upon arriving here, is that DHHS has clearly defined [Values and Core Competencies](#) to drive our work. These are the behaviors and attitudes that are the foundation of a great culture.

I'm all about building a positive and effective culture in which people can thrive and do their best work. It's in

doing our best work that we will best help Nebraskans live better lives!

As I reviewed results from the DHHS Annual Employee Surveys from the past four years, I paid close attention to those areas that rated lowest across all dimensions. Communication was one of those areas. The information was insightful, but it left me with some questions.

Communication is very important to me. Productive Communication is one of DHHS' Core Competencies. It's essential to the success of our organization and interfaces everything we do. Good communication is vital to ensuring understanding and proper messaging within any organization and is especially challenging in our organization due to its complexity,

size and distribution of staff across the State.

I've decided to focus this year's Employee Survey on questions to dig deeper into the specific areas of communication that concern you. I want to know more so we can find ways to improve our communication within DHHS.

I want to know about communication within your work center and with your supervisor, administrator, and other senior Division leaders. I'm also interested in how communication works across the Department as well as the communication methods you rely on to get information. You'll then have an opportunity to identify areas you would like to see improved and be able to include specific comments.

So, I want to hear from you. You will be receiving your Employee Survey in the coming weeks. Please take a few minutes to complete it. It is important you understand the survey is confidential. I encourage you to be honest and constructive with your feedback, providing your suggestions on how we can address any communication challenges identified.

Participation in the survey is voluntary, but this is one of your best opportunities to ensure your voice is heard. Please take the time to complete the survey. I'm here to listen, to learn and to be a part of the team that's working together to help Nebraskans live better lives. I look forward to reviewing your survey responses.

Courtney N. Phillips

A Day in the Life of... the Program Integrity Unit, Medicaid and Long-Term Care

By Dianna Seiffert

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This “Day in the Life” series highlights DHHS employees and how we help people live better lives in different ways, through diverse jobs, across the state, every day. The following story is only one of many positive stories to be told about DHHS employees. If you’d like to be featured in our “Day in the Life” series, email [Ashley Hartman](#) or call her at 402-471-9108.

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[Fraud Awareness Week](#) is observed in November, but DHHS has several groups that investigate fraud all year long. DHHS employees in the [Program Integrity Unit](#) in Medicaid and Long-term Care, investigate fraud, waste and abuse of Medicaid program benefits by providers.

“Medicaid Program Integrity is complicated to learn, and the rules are always changing,” said program manager **Anne Harvey**. Anne ought to know. She has worked in the Program Integrity unit for 13 years, moving from investigator to manager, and said she learns new things all the time.

One thing somewhat new is the name. “Program Integrity” was once called “SUR” for surveillance and utilization review. States are required by federal law to perform program integrity functions, so adding the word “integrity” brought the important component of prevention to the team’s already ambitious investigation goals.

“The first step in combating fraud is raising awareness that it’s a serious problem that requires a proactive approach to prevent it,” Anne said.

“The first step in combating fraud is raising awareness that it’s a serious problem that requires a proactive approach to prevent it.”

DHHS’ Program Integrity Unit is a busy one, that when fully staffed has nine investigators working detailed and complex investigations that often take a lot of time to complete.

Examples of provider fraud include:

- Billing for services not rendered or for more costly services than rendered
- Falsifying medical or billing records
- Billing for services provided by unqualified or unlicensed personnel
- Receiving kickbacks from medical providers for referrals or use of product

Provider abuse case examples include:

- Rendering or ordering excessive services, especially diagnostic tests
- Providing services inconsistent with the diagnosis and treatment of the recipient
- Rendering or ordering medically unnecessary services
- Poor or unsatisfactory quality of care provided to a recipient
- Billing recipient for remaining balance after Medicaid payment

How do the investigators find cases to review? Anne said staff members obtain tips from other states, meetings and collaborative calls. They get case referrals from newspapers, the public and other coworkers. Other sources

include national conferences, staff trainings, law enforcement, the state’s Department of Insurance and private insurance companies.

If the investigations point to fraud, Program Integrity staff refer their allegations to law enforcement including the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit in the Attorney General’s office, the federal Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigations for prosecution. Staff also work with the federal Health Care Fraud Task Force.

With all of the money that the Program Integrity unit has recovered and saved over the years, the program practically pays for itself! Last year staff:

- Closed 160 case investigations;
 - Recovered \$458,266 of erroneous Medicaid payments due to fraud, waste or abuse; and
 - Referred 18 credible allegations of fraud to law enforcement.
- Staff also helped avoid \$1,020,733 of erroneous payments through National Correct Coding Edits.

“The people working for the Program Integrity unit are excellent. They all work really hard. Through collaboration of the team we can and do accomplish a lot,” said Anne.

Anne said staff are constantly working

to educate providers about Medicaid rules and regulations helping them better understand the program, services and payment processes.

“We email [Program Integrity bulletins](#) to providers and keep our website up to date and easy to navigate. We’re always learning new ways to help providers,” Anne said.

How can you help? You can send your concerns about Medicaid provider fraud, waste or abuse to Medicaid Program Integrity at DHHS.MedicaidProgramIntegrity@nebraska.gov.

In addition to the Program Integrity Unit, DHHS has other groups that investigate fraud:

- The [Special Investigations Unit](#) in Public Health investigates cases involving public assistance recipients and child care providers. They also conduct internal investigations. Concerns about recipient fraud should be sent to DHHS.InvestigationsSIU@nebraska.gov.
- The [Nebraska Senior Medicare Patrol \(SMP\)](#) is part of the State Unit on Aging and works to help individuals identify and report possible Medicare and Medicaid fraud, error or waste. Their findings are reported to federal agencies for further investigation. SMP’s toll free line is 1-800-942-7830.

Bring Up Nebraska: Everyone Has a Role in Preventing Child Abuse and Raising Strong, Stable Kids

“Caring people and organizations in our communities are key in working with families who might be at risk of abuse or neglect,” said **Courtney Phillips**, CEO “We recognize the important role they play in strengthening families, and we understand the need to support them in their work as well.”

A new website, BringUpNebraska.org, launched by the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board with funding from DHHS, provides information for people to build and encourage communities and families to help raise strong, stable kids. The information is helpful to parents, teachers, service providers, businesses, friends and neighbors.

Phillips pointed to six protective factors that can help prevent child abuse and neglect:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents
- Social and emotional well-being of children

“When communities construct frameworks to support these protective factors, families and their children experience healthier relationships and children are safer, which is our goal,” Gov. Pete Ricketts said. “I urge Nebraskans to visit the Bring Up Nebraska website and find out how we all can support children and families and make a difference in their lives.”

In Nebraska, state law requires anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report it to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-652-1999, law enforcement, or a local DHHS office. Reporting and preventing child abuse and neglect is everyone’s responsibility including employers, social services, schools, and even those who live next door.

“Everyone has a role in preventing child abuse,” Gov. Ricketts said. “It’s even more critical for communities to recognize ways to strengthen families at risk and prevent child abuse.”

The following can be warning signs of child abuse or neglect:

- Lack of enough food or clothing or a safe place to live
- Unexplained or repeated injuries like bruises, welts, or cuts
- Not following doctors’ orders
- Children under age six left unattended
- Lack of supervision to keep a child safe

When people call the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline they are not required to give their names, although it is helpful in case more information is needed later.

Clothing Drive for Foster Care Children

Students from Adams Central High School collected more than 500 items of clothing from four different schools to help area children in foster care. The students chose April for their clothing drive to focus on child abuse awareness and prevention month. The clothes were donated to South Central Behavioral Services, a foster care agency serving the Hastings area, and to DHHS staff to distribute to children in need.

Three of the students and SkillsUSA team members gave a comprehensive presentation at the Nebraska State SkillsUSA Convention in Lincoln on April 15, regarding their foster care clothing drive community service project. The students won the state level competition and will represent Nebraska on the national level in Louisville, Kentucky in June.

Read more in the April 27 Neat to Know story: [Update on Hastings Area Student Community Service Project](#)



DHHS CEO Courtney Phillips, left, talks with Tiffany and Brandon Verzal at the Second Annual Pinwheels for Prevention Picnic held April 25 in Lincoln. *Photo: Russ Reno*



Kati Jurens an Adams Central Skills USA member, loads a box of clothes into a van. Kati and other high school students chose to collect clothes for area foster care children as their community service project. Kati is the daughter of **Lisa Jurens**, DHHS Resource Developer, Hastings. With Kati are: Emily Vonderfect, Adams Central’s Skills USA member; **Brenda Aipperspach**, Resource Developer, Hastings, left; and Sandy Harp, South Central Behavioral Services. *Photo: Kara Pettit*

Copy and Paste, View and Listen, and You Might Just Pay the Price



Source: ThinkStock

By Bill Wiley

Because of digital technology, today is largely a “copy and paste” world. We do just that when writing emails, reports, newsletters, presentations, etc. It’s also common to copy and paste images and music from the Internet because it’s so easy and they add a creative touch that makes your message distinctive and personal. After all, a picture says a thousand words, right? And music stirs the soul!

The problem, contrary to public perception, is that creative works like books, videos, music and photo images are forms of “intellectual property” and are protected by copyright laws. This means they are “owned” and can’t be legally used without permission from the copyright owner. For example, for photos, the owner could be an individual, a business or a stock photo agency.

How do you know if a photo is copyrighted? An image is copyrighted as soon as the picture is taken. No

longer does a photographer have to send a copyright application with the picture to the U.S. Copyright Office and wait weeks or months before the copyright is granted. So, it’s best to assume that all images are copyrighted rather than just assume that they are freebies.

Copyrighted images are often marked with the copyright symbol © in the corner with the photographer’s name, or it can have a watermark indicating that it’s copyrighted. A credit might also be underneath the image or in a caption. Also, digital images sometimes contain what’s called EXIF data, information programmed into images by the photographer that reveals the photographer’s name, contact information, date the image was taken and much more. Photoshop software and other programs enable anyone to easily determine detailed information about the image, right down to the shutter speed and f-stop used to take the picture.

Why should you care? Because when legally defined, an image is a “creation of the mind.” Its copyright indicates that it exists because of the photographer’s initiative, creativity, and potentially at great expense.

Therefore, the person who created the image has legal rights of ownership. In some cases, the photographer is a professional who depends on their pictures for their livelihood. It doesn’t matter what the subject is...people, sports, fashion or wildlife...it’s violating

the law to simply copy and use it without the photographer’s permission.

While it might seem like a pain, you should follow the law to protect the photographer’s property and avoid copyright infringement. A good policy is that whenever you’re in doubt about if an image is copyrighted, contact the photographer and get permission. More than likely, the photographer will be flattered and grant permission as long as you include a credit. If you can’t locate the photographer, simply find another image. There are many image websites on the Internet that contain pictures that are not subject to copyright or royalty laws, including Bing Images, Google Images, StockSnap.io, Splitshire, Life of Pix, IM Free and others. Many images from these sites allow you to copy, modify, use privately or for commercial purposes, all without asking permission.

The likelihood of getting caught using a copyrighted image isn’t great, because the Internet is so vast, but it can happen. Software exists that enables photographers and businesses to search the internet to determine if their copyrighted images are being used by someone else.

Out of curiosity, I’ve searched to see if any of my nature/wildlife images are being used by a different party and found that numerous images are on personal and professional websites, mostly in America, but also in Europe and Asia. And that doesn’t include anything that may have been printed, as I couldn’t track that. In some cases my name had been Photoshopped off so no

credit was given. While I was flattered to see my images in use, I felt it wasn’t right that I wasn’t given credit and that another person could profit financially by using my images.

If a photo is being used illegally, sometimes photographers won’t initiate any legal action, but they could. Or, sometimes the user may agree to pay a fee to compensate in order to use the image.

The same generally applies to music. YouTube, for instance, strictly monitors the use of music in videos. And, we’ve had similar situations at DHHS where we have not been able to post a video to our website because of concerns over music.

This all might sound extreme, but that’s what copyright is all about... protecting the use of a copyrighted image by unauthorized parties.

The Internet has changed the perception of copying images so that most people hardly bother to think about whether or not the image might be legally owned by someone. However, if you’re the person who owns the studio, photographs a major sporting event or spends days in a photo blind photographing a wild animal, the image represents your time, skills and expenses.

So if there’s a copyrighted image that you can’t do without, contact the photographer and ask for permission to use the image...it’s the right thing to do for you and DHHS, and besides, it’s the law.

Getting Past Feeling Overwhelmed and Not in Control

“We don’t see things as they are. We see things as we are.” Anaïs Nin

By Richard Mettler,
Human Resources

During times of change and uncertainty in the workplace it’s understandable that we think about what it all means and what the future might bring. This sensible awareness of our ever-evolving workplace is a good thing when kept in perspective.



However, some folks spend a lot of time and energy concerning themselves with events that are beyond their control, and mere possibilities that may never come to be. These people do themselves a disservice when healthy awareness of the workplace is replaced with overwhelming worry—a nagging anxiety that drains a person.

This kind of worry occurs when people put a truly negative spin on current and possible future experience. People sometimes ‘tell themselves a story,’ generally with little to no reliable information, and then act as though this story they told themselves is based in fact.

Consider the following complaint, an excerpt from someone who told himself a story:

“The world is too big for us. Too much is going on, too many crimes, too much violence and excitement. Try as you will, you get behind in the race, in spite of yourself. It’s an incessant strain to keep pace... and still, you lose ground. Science empties its discoveries on you so fast that you stagger beneath them in hopeless bewilderment. The political world is news seen so rapidly you’re out of breath trying to keep pace with who’s in and who’s out. Everything is high pressure. Human nature cannot endure much more.”—*Atlantic Journal editorial, June 16, 1833*

Thankfully, human nature did endure, at least long enough to find time for us.

When feeling overwhelmed and not in control there are concrete steps you can take to regain a healthy, productive perspective.

- (1) Remind yourself of all the events in the workplace over which you never had control. Remember that you got this far in your career not by controlling these events, but by adapting to these events. Quite simply, let go of the illusion that you must control most events at work to succeed and be happy.
- (2) Focus on what you can control at work—excellence in performance of job duties, developing rewarding relationships, and the joy in carrying out the DHHS mission: Helping people live better lives.

- (3) Find an objective person whose opinions you value, and explain what’s troubling you. Ask this person to be your reality coach. Discuss your progress in steps (1) and (2) above. Then ask this person for honest feedback in how you can progress even further in these steps.
- (4) Be a reality coach for someone else. This benefits you as well as the other person. It’s been said that we never truly understand something until we teach it.



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Please email your thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships to Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov. I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your ideas in a future column.

“What we see depends mainly on what we look for” – Sir John Lubbock

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.

To: **Elizabeth Esseks** (Drinking Water Program Specialist, Lincoln), **Julie Reno** (Program Manager, Lincoln) and others who helped organized Public Health's monthly Program-to-Program event.

I just want to say this is a wonderful idea! I am thrilled to see this happen and look forward to learning about what others do with the possibility of collaborating. Kudos!

Mary Lentini,
Women's Health Initiatives, Lincoln

Pastor Ken Robinson (Religious Coordinator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney),

It was a real blessing to meet you and see the work you are doing in Kearney. I enjoyed the day and getting a chance to tour the campus and see your chapel. It was a special day. If I didn't mention it before, my father was a pastor. Please accept this gift to help you in any way you need it with your work. You are a blessing and a witness to many.

Editor's Note: This letter included a donation to the Tyler J. Smith Purple Project which is working to spread awareness about suicide prevention and the dangers of synthetic drugs like K-2.

To **DHHS Economic Assistance Staff:**

I just really appreciate all the help when I needed it. Thank you all!

A Grateful Client who just started a new job and wanted to adjust her benefits according.

Dear **Dr. Joseph Acierno** (Acting CEO at the time, and Director of DHHS' Division of Public Health, Lincoln),
Over the past year, it has been both a misfortune and a pleasure to work with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Misfortune in that my father health and financial situation left no alternative other than to pursue Medicaid assistance.

However, it has been a pleasure in that we were fortunate to have **Virginia Ingels** (Social Services Worker, North Platte) assigned to my father's case. Virginia provided compassionate, caring and patient assistance during the lengthy Medicaid application process. Our situation was made more complex in that there are no immediate family living near my parents, so there were many long distance phone calls, emails and questions between the nursing home staff, my parents, Virginia and me.

I'm sure being a Medicaid case worker is a stressful job since the situations involved must always be much less than ideal for the applicants and their families. The rules and regulations are complex but I always felt I was dealing with a real person, when communicating with Virginia.

Please join me in acknowledging and thanking Virginia for her good and kind work.

A Thankful Client

Brenda Bender (Social Services Supervisor, Kearney),

I just wanted to send you a note to let you know how appreciative I am that Monica Young (Social Services Worker, Kearney) is always willing to help me out with a question so that I can produce better training. Anytime I have a process question, I know I can ask Monica and she will respond kindly and take a minute to help. This is a great example of agency team work.

Cheri Anderson, Training Specialist, Kearney