

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services teammates closer together

## 2019 – 2020 Fiscal Year Business Plan Launched



The fourth annual DHHS business plan – Helping Hands: Helping People Live Better Lives – was released at a news conference at the Governor’s Hearing Room at the State Capitol the morning of Aug. 26.

The plan identifies 15 priority initiatives that strategically align with Gov. Pete Ricketts’ leadership. To achieve the Governor’s aims, CEO Dannette R. Smith has developed a four-pronged approach:

1. Create an integrated service delivery system.
2. Establish and enhance collaborative relationships.
3. Align DHHS teammates under our mission of Helping People Live Better Lives.
4. Enhance the Department’s internal infrastructure to provide more effective, efficient, customer-focused services to Nebraskans.

The business plan initiatives constitute the strategies and tactics to operationalize these approaches.

“I appreciate Governor Ricketts’ support during my first six months leading DHHS. I am excited to share the Department’s fourth annual business plan which will serve as the guide to our strategic

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## New DHHS Offices Open in North Omaha & South Sioux City



At the open house in Omaha, CEO Dannette R. Smith (second from right) visits with Child/Family Services Specialists Traea Bowden, Donta Brown and Cornelius Levering. (Malcolm X art by Troy Spencer)

Central Operations and Materiel Services (COMS) has opened some new offices in the past few months.

A new DHHS office at 5319 N 30th Street, Suite B, in North Omaha held its open house July 31. It began serving the North Omaha community in June.

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priorities and initiatives through June 2020,” said CEO Smith. “The plan operationalizes my four-pronged approach to living our mission of helping people live better lives.”

Smith said some of this year’s initiatives will build on the progress made on last year’s priorities while others provide new opportunities for DHHS to benefit those the Department serves.

The 15 initiatives are aimed at integrated service delivery, developing collaborative relationships, aligning teammates under one mission, and enhancing internal infrastructure. Each initiative will result in measurable improvements and continue a commitment by the Department to be accountable, transparent and fiscally responsible. The initiatives include:

## INTEGRATE SERVICE DELIVERY

There are nine initiatives in this category:

- Maintain and Improve ACCESSNebraska’s Performance
- Family First Prevention Services Act
- Access to High-Quality Child Care
- Nebraska Olmstead Plan
- Identify the Institutional Level of Care Assessments
- Medicaid Long-Term Care Redesign
- Heritage Health Adult Program Implementation
- Child Welfare Adaptation of Healthy Families America
- Promoting Wellbeing at DHHS Facilities



## DEVELOP COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

There are three initiatives in this category:

- SNAP Next Step
- Enhance Constituent Outreach
- Behavioral Health Workforce Competencies

## ALIGN TEAMMATES UNDER ONE MISSION

- Mission-Driven Teammate Life Cycle

## ENHANCE INTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE

There are two initiatives in this category:

- Fiscal Stewardship
- Increase Fiscal Proficiency and Identify New Areas of Improvement

Governor Ricketts also highlighted achievements from the past year made by DHHS as part of its third business plan, including:

- Expanding SNAP Next Step
- Launching Phase II of

the Family Focused Case Management pilot

- Enacting Family Action Support Teams (FAST) in six more counties
- Continuing the transformation of behavioral healthcare for children
- Addressing opioid misuse
- Implementing electronic benefit cards
- Redesigning the DHHS website

Governor Ricketts said the DHHS successes can be attributed to a team dedicated to their mission, a commitment to excellence, and a focus on change and continued improvement. He applauded CEO Smith and the DHHS team for accomplishing 90 percent of the 173 deliverables in last year’s plan.

A look back on the agency’s progress over the last year (2018-2019) can be found by [clicking here](#). The DHHS business plan for the upcoming year (2019-2020) can be accessed by [clicking here](#).

Video from the news conference is available by [clicking here](#).



# The TSB: Helping DHHS Conduct State Business

Karen Billings, administrative assistant at the Transportation Services Bureau (TSB), can answer any question about renting a car from the TSB – from the process of rental (see sidebar on following page) to the meaning of the two numbers you have to enter on the clipboard.

A true expert, she can also fill you in on things you didn't know you didn't know.

First, DHHS teammates are members of an exclusive group. They are covered by a universal authorization to rent a vehicle. Some agency's workers need to have each occurrence of vehicle rental approved.

"Vehicle" is key because the TSB doesn't only have sub-compact to intermediate sized cars; it also boasts SUVs, vans and mini-vans. These are available for specific tasks, while the intermediate cars accommodate larger groups or very tall or larger drivers. It has "gas-burners" and flex-fuel vehicles that can burn up to E-85 (85% ethanol).

Despite an E-85 warning on the gas filler door and the fact that fuel nozzles and filler holes are sized based on fuel type, sometimes E-85 is dispensed into a gas vehicle.

"What happens when you do, it causes all sorts of interesting

issues in the car's engine," Billings said. "So then we have to drain the tank."

TSB has 10 staff total – four at the Service Center (east of the TSB office,) three at the Rental Center, and three office workers. The Service Center provides vehicle maintenance and the Rental Center provides fueling assistance and rental preparation.

There are short and long-term vehicle assignments, Billings said. Most teammates will only be familiar with short-term vehicle rental, but those needing a vehicle consistently for more than two

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## Jason Kerkman Wins Martha Collar Award for Outstanding State Coordinator



Jason Kerkman poses with the other local Safe Kids coordinators from Nebraska who attended the conference recently.

Jason Kerkman, the coordinator of Safe Kids Nebraska, won the Martha Collar Outstanding Coordinator Award July 18 at the Safe Kids Worldwide International Childhood Injury Prevention Convention (PrevCon) for his work in preventing childhood injuries in Nebraska. Kerkman has been in the role since 2010.

Kerkman joined more than 500 safety professionals from the U.S. and around the world to collaborate on efforts to enhance the safety of children on the road, at home and at play. Kerkman was selected from more than 400 coordinators across the United States.

The conference ran July 17 through the 20th.

"From what I understand, I was

nominated by Safe Kids," he said. "I think it was partly because of the Get Seat-iated campaign focused on the changing laws concerning child safety seats."

"I was honored and somewhat surprised to win the award," Kerkman continued. "It's just nice for your work to be recognized. There are a lot of people involved in injury prevention in Nebraska to keep Nebraska's young adults and children safe. It was great to receive this alongside other people doing great work."

"Jason is a dynamic force, a recognized leader within Safe Kids, and an inspiration to our entire network," said Torine Creppy,

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weeks may be “leased” a car if their agency decided that’s the best option.

“There is also a mileage requirement we ask for every month,” she said. “If you know you’ll have at least a 1,000 miles or more a month on a vehicle, then you request a leased vehicle for TSB.”

The process of renting has changed slightly, Billings said. They had used an identification card issued by the TSB. You still see a few of them, she added. Today the process uses a Nebraska Driver’s License and the state ID badge which notes if the defensive driving course has been taken.

“The employee ID number that you use to access the course then is your TSB Driver ID number,” she said. “For most employees that is also their regular ID number.”

“We made the change because, with the current global environment, it’s important to

ensure that everyone is authorized to operate a motor vehicle in the state of Nebraska, and as an employee of the State of Nebraska,” she said.

The agency and division numbers teammates enter when they check out a car is used to bill each business unit every month.

The TSB office is also in charge of obtaining the vehicles through a contract process. Mileage as well as the accumulated sum of money received in rental and leasing fees is used to decide when a vehicle’s work is done for the state. Disposing of the cars at the end of their lives is complicated by the regulation that states that the state can’t make a profit on its vehicles.

Billings said that she or any teammate there would be happy to answer any question DHHS has about renting a vehicle. Billings has been with the TSB since 2004 and with the state for more than 20 years.

## Rodriguez Awarded Health Equity Champion Award



Josie Rodriguez, administrator of the Office of Health Disparities and Health Equity, was awarded the Health Equity Champion Award at the 2019 Heartland Conference on Health Equity and Patient Centered Care in Kansas City on Aug. 7, the final day of the two-day conference at the Kansas University Overland Park campus. Between 250 and 300 attended the gathering.

The award is given every year to an individual who has done important work in health equity

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## Helpful Hints on Renting a Car

**Before you rent a car** – Drivers of state cars need to have passed the defensive driving course that can be found on the Employee Development Center. Specialized vehicles can be reserved ahead of time.

**Car pick up** – There are six motor pools in the state: Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney, North Platte, Norfolk and Scottsbluff. The last two are operated remotely from Lincoln, whose hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. A car needed first thing the next day can be rented after 4 p.m. the previous day.

**What you’ll need** – You’ll need to show a valid Nebraska Driver’s license, a valid state ID badge and have the number of your agency (DHHS is 25) and a second number that describes the division within that agency. Many people write those numbers on a trimmed business card which is inserted behind their ID badge in its case.

**Plan your trip** – For a longer trip, find a list of gas stations that dispense E-85 gas if your vehicle requires it. Or download the Voyager app on your phone to track which filling stations have E-85 and also take the state gas card. Information on this app and many other facts can be found here. The TSB home page may be found at <http://das.nebraska.gov/tsb/> and the Voyager vendor acceptance locator link is <https://www.fleetcommanderonline.com/app/public/merchantLocator.do>.

**At Journey’s end** – Be sure to spend some time gathering all your belongings. The TSB will try to contact you about belongings left in vehicles, but remembering at the time is easier for everybody.

## Jason Kerkman Wins Martha Collar Award (continued from page 3)

president of Safe Kids Worldwide, during the presentation. “Too many kids do not have a chance to reach their full potential because of an injury that is preventable. Jason’s passion and commitment are making a difference in his community and beyond as we work together to reach more families, prevent more injuries and save more lives.”

Preventable injuries are the number one cause of death for children in the United States.

Throughout the world, almost one million children die of an injury each year, and almost every one of these tragedies is preventable.

Jason has his own story involving preventable injury.

At the age of 21 he fell asleep driving and sustained a spinal cord injury, which left him paralyzed from his upper chest down. This life altering event led him to earning his Master’s degree in Public Health and his journey in injury prevention.

After more than 25 years using a wheelchair, he still stays physically active by participating in wheelchair road racing. He’s completed dozens of marathons and half marathons and most recently finished the Lincoln Half marathon in May.

Originally of Wisconsin, Kerkman grew up in Northern Illinois. After his crash, he rehabilitated in Wisconsin. He moved to Nebraska in 2004.

## Rodriguez Awarded Health Equity Champion Award (continued from page 4)

and succeeded in making an impact statewide and regionally. In addition, Regional Health Equity Champions exemplify the objectives of the Heartland Conference objectives:

- develop health focused partnerships
- explore strategies to preserve the health of our communities
- understand perspectives to address community and population health
- provide opportunities for community health workers to grow and develop
- highlight patients and families as health care partners

She was presented the award by Todd Moore, conference organizer and project director at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Rodriguez added she didn’t know who nominated her.

While there, she presented on the work of the Region VII Health Equity Counsel, which has been active since 2011. Rodriguez has been a part of it for about five years.

“The council is currently in a transition period as changes took place in 2018” she said. “The group did a lot of work in Region VII. We convened the group together and produced various work products including a Regional Blueprint, Regional Health Equity Resource Guide and a Region VII Heart Disease Disparities Report, which compared the states’ heart disease prevalence and mortality disparities. Our office took the lead in producing that report. We just completed another report looking at new time periods to see what changes took place.”

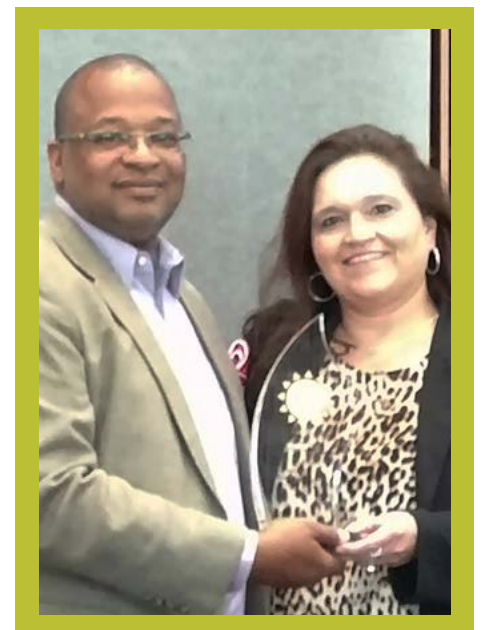
Also attending the conference from DHHS were Diane Lowe and Jessie Perez, both members of Rodriguez’s team. They presented on grant outcomes for work the office is doing regarding diabetes among American Indian populations.

“I am honored to receive the 2019 Heartland Regional Health Equity Champion Award and to be in the company with the current and past award winners who are doing great work in Region VII to reduce health disparities and

advance health equity, including Corstella Johnson whom is also a recipient this year,” said Rodriguez.

Johnson is a Regional Minority Health Consultant, HHS Region VII.

Rodriguez has worked for the state of Nebraska for more than 25 years.



Rodriguez is presented the award by Todd Moore, conference organizer and project director at the University of Kansas Medical Center.



# Teammates Gather to Wish Wallen Well



Members of the leadership and Children and Family Services (CFS) teams gathered last Wednesday afternoon at the Lincoln Community Foundation building to wish Director of the Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) Matt Wallen well in his further endeavors.

Wallen joined the department as Chief of Staff in December 2015 and served as CFS director since August 2017. His last day with DHHS was Sept. 8.

At the reception, CEO Dannette R. Smith spoke of the deep impact Wallen had on DHHS, touting Wallen's success in improving and maintaining ACCESSNebraska call wait times. She also presented him with a glass trophy memorializing his tenure at DHHS.

Members of his team testified to Wallen's caring nature during milestones in their lives, adding that they'll miss his leadership in the role.

Wallen spoke movingly of the peaks and valleys he experienced, both personally and professionally, during the period, mentioning the birth of a child and the death of a parent, and of the difficulty and importance of the work of CFS.

Organizers served cake, beverages and other treats at the gathering.



# GOOD LUCK!

# In Gratitude

The Nebraska Department  
of Health and Human Services' mission:  
***Helping people live better lives.***

Here are some letters & notes DHHS teammates have received thanking us for the work we do every day to help people live better lives:

## **Kudos received by Vicki Schindler, social services lead worker:**

I had a couple appeals with you last week. Now that the orders have been written and signed I can tell you that your case summaries were some of the best I've ever seen. They were well written and very helpful. They contained all of the information I needed as a hearing officer to understand the case prior to the hearing. I meant to write myself a note about which cases they were, but apparently I did not. I know one of them was 190870, which was a fairly uncommon SNAP situation for the hearing office (exempt student). You covered everything and made the situation understandable. I think the other one was an EF but I'm not sure. I do remember being impressed by your effort when reading it, however. Thank you so much for all your hard work – everyone in the hearing office appreciates it.

– Susan L. Kirchmann  
*Lead Hearing Officer*

## **To Emily Bunch, graphic designer, from Steven Greene II:**

I just wanted to send you a quick email sharing my appreciation for your good work. You are clearly a professional and an artist. The presentations went really well, I think people really loved how clear and clean the slides were. Thanks.

## **A note from an Iowa case worker regarding the service he was provided from our vital records teammates:**

In the last seven years, I have dealt with 48 different US vital records departments. Well, 51 including D.C. and New York which had a separate department for the five boroughs. I had dealt with embassies, other counties offices, and our own immigration department (very difficult). Your agency is in the top five with communication concerning birth documents and that is greatly appreciated.

## **Kudos received by Jana Peterson regarding Cassie Stephens, a social services worker based in Lexington:**

Hi Jana, I'm sorry to bother you but I just wanted to call and let you know that your employee, Cassie, is amazing. I called in about eligibility today and she was able to help me and she was really phenomenal. And I feel like that she went above what she necessarily had to do for her job to help me out. So I just wanted to let you know that and thank you very much for being such a good supervisor for training that individual. And also I just wanted to let you know so that you can thank her because she was really phenomenal and extremely helpful. Hope you have an amazing day!

– A client



In addition, the Dakota City DHHS office relocated to 3210 Plaza Drive in South Sioux City in July, a move that improved its accessibility to external customers. The South Sioux City site is located on a bus route with sidewalks for safe walkability for the public.

## After



These pictures compare the dated design of the Dakota City office with the 21st century concept of the new offices in South Sioux City, which features sit/stand desks and translucent glass panels.

## Before



### Make the Connection...

**DHHS Public Website:** [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)

**DHHS Employee Website:** <http://dhhsemployees/>

**DHHS Helpline:** 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at [dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov)  
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