

ACCESSNebraska and Economic Assistance

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History of ACCESSNebraska

- Began in 2008 with an online application.
- Subsequent expansions gave clients ability to review their benefits, report case changes, & upload documents.
- The first customer service center opened in November 2010 and the last of the 4 in 2012.

Universal Caseload

- Cases were moved from assigned workers to a “universal” caseload.
- Local offices are still open and face-to-face meetings can be scheduled, local office staffing was, however, reduced.
- LB 825 (2012) allowed CFS to retain 22.5 staff scheduled for layoff and to hire an additional 22 staff.

Issues and Changes

- Complicated cases are now assigned to an employee to work the case from the time of application until it processed.
- Allowing workers in Customer Service Centers to process a case as soon as the interview is completed if all required information is available
- Emphasis on one-call resolution and quality of work.
- SNAP error rate ranking was 21st for Federal Fiscal Year 2012, and is now at an unofficial ranking of 8th in the nation through April 2013, unofficially in 9th place for most improved.

Staffing

- 2 of 4 customer service centers, 60% of local office staff, and 1 of 2 document scanning centers remain with CFS.
 - Random Moment Time Study used to calculate staffing proportions.
 - Federal funding allowed funding for new 28.5 FTE positions for Economic Assistance.
- Current staffing numbers for Economic Assistance:
 - Fremont Customer Service Center: 155
 - Scottsbluff Customer Service Center: 100
 - Omaha Document Imaging Center: 20
 - Local Offices: 256
 - The policy and administrative staff, including our Quality Control function: 63

- Staff are now trained to learn SNAP and Energy Assistance first and become experts in those areas before training them on other programs. This builds worker confidence and improves the quality of work.
- The largest Economic Assistance programs are:
 - SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps): 80,119 households
 - Energy Assistance: 2,584 clients
 - Child Care: 19,331 child care recipients
 - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant: 6,888 families
- Economic Assistance phone wait times are down to an average of less than 8 minutes, from a previous average of over 20 minutes.
- Work tasks related to cases have increased.

Phone Lines

- 299 total phone lines.
 - Economic Assistance: 207
 - 92 for Omaha only
 - 115 for remainder of the state
 - Medicaid: 92
- Local numbers for Lincoln & Omaha area callers as a cost savings measure.
- Toll free number for the rest of the state.
- Economic Assistance phone wait times are down to an average of less than 6 minutes, from a previous average of over 30 minutes.

Additional Changes

- Made policy changes to reduce the number of required interviews and simplify the interview process.
- Automated system changes.
- Moved interviews and processing of new applications to local office staff.
- Simplified the Economic Assistance paper application that will be effective January 1, 2014.
- Changed the phone menu for those calling Economic Assistance to simplify it for callers.
- Paid overtime to staff to complete work tasks.

Outside Reviews

- Changes recommended by Strategic Contact
 - Reducing new worker training from 16 weeks to 5.5 weeks.
 - More staff assigned to each supervisor.
 - Through savings of not filling supervisor positions, hiring a Contact Center Manager.
- Reviews pending from:
 - NelNet
 - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Legislative Performance Audit Committee