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DHHS' Employment Assistance to Welfare Recipients Ranked Tops in Nation

Lincoln – Employment assistance provided Nebraska welfare recipients was ranked the most successful in the nation, according to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The ACF study was recently announced for 2011 and marks the first time Nebraska's Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program ranked first in the nation, said Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services in the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The study has ranked Nebraska ADC as high as 2nd in 2002, and 3rd in 2007. In 2010, Nebraska's ranking was 11th in the nation.

The most recent study shows the number of adults entering employment, retaining their job in three consecutive quarters and gains in their earnings during that time period were the best of any state in the nation, he said.

The federal study showed that 36 percent of the state's ADC recipients entered employment, which was the 4th highest rate in the country, Pristow said. The remaining clients were in training or attending school unless they weren't able to work. The percentage of recipients who retained jobs in three consecutive quarters was 68 percent and 7th highest in the nation. Of those who were employed, 47 percent saw an increase in salary for 12th best in the country.

"When ACF combined the results for those three categories, our efforts gave our ADC program the highest ranking in the nation for effectiveness in employment skills so clients could move to self-dependency," Pristow said.

ADC receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds from the federal government to operate the program. In 2011, Nebraska's Employment First program assisted an average of 4,849 clients each month, he

said. DHHS contracts with ResCare and Maximus-PSI to provide employment training and placement services to ADC recipients.

All adults receiving ADC who are able to work must take part in DHHS' Employment First program, Pristow said.

"Thanks to the daily, one-on-one work of our employees, and the training ADC clients receive from our contractors through our Employment First program, we're able to provide these individuals a pathway to a more self-sufficient future," said Kerry Winterer, DHHS CEO. "Their success, as shown in the study's findings, reflects the effectiveness of our program."

The ADC cash assistance program is for indigent families with children and provides training and work experience to help adults find employment so they no longer need financial assistance, he said. ADC helps to pay for family living expenses such as rent, utilities, food, clothing and other necessities.

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