

AMENDMENTS TO LB 825

Introduced by Health and Human Services

1           1. Strike the original sections and insert the following  
2 sections:

3           Section 1. For purposes of sections 1 to 6 of this act:

4           (1) Client means an applicant for one or more economic  
5 assistance programs or his or her legal representative;

6           (2) Community-based organization means:

7           (a) An area agency on aging established pursuant to the  
8 Nebraska Community Aging Services Act;

9           (b) A Nebraska-based community action agency designated  
10 under the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2701  
11 et seq., as such sections existed on January 1, 2012;

12           (c) A Nebraska-based center for independent living  
13 established under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C.  
14 701 et seq., as such section existed on January 1, 2012;

15           (d) A Nebraska-based rural health clinic established  
16 under the federal Rural Health Clinics Act of 1983, 42 U.S.C. 201  
17 et seq., as such section existed on January 1, 2012;

18           (e) A Nebraska-based federally qualified health center  
19 and rural health clinic as such terms are defined in the federal  
20 Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 1395x(aa), as such section existed  
21 on January 1, 2012; and

22           (f) Any other organization that demonstrates to the  
23 department that it can comply with the requirements of subsection

1 (2) of section 5 of this act;

2 (3) Economic assistance programs includes aid to  
3 dependent children; aid to the aged, blind, and disabled;  
4 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; medicaid; child care;  
5 emergency assistance; energy assistance; social services block  
6 grants; and other similar programs administered by the department;  
7 and

8 (4) Existing local office means all office locations for  
9 economic assistance programs of the Department of Health and Human  
10 Services that existed on January 1, 2012.

11 Sec. 2. (1) The Department of Health and Human Services  
12 shall staff multiple, integrated access points for economic  
13 assistance programs administered by the department in order to  
14 assure that Nebraskans who rely on such programs will be able to  
15 utilize them effectively.

16 (2) The department shall staff existing local offices  
17 that provide access to economic assistance programs throughout the  
18 state with caseworkers to provide in-person services to department  
19 clients. The department shall provide sufficient numbers and hours  
20 of staff to perform the activities described in this section and  
21 section 3 of this act.

22 (3) The department shall determine appropriate numbers  
23 and hours of staff for each existing local office based on a review  
24 of the need in each service area. In determining the appropriate  
25 numbers and hours of staff, the department shall, at a minimum,  
26 consider: (a) The need for staff to travel to community-based  
27 organizations as provided in section 5 of this act; (b) the volume

1 of economic assistance cases in the counties served by the existing  
2 local office; (c) the number of community-based organizations in  
3 the counties served by the existing local office; (d) the volume  
4 of call-center calls originating in the counties served by the  
5 existing local office; and (e) the requirements of sections 1 to 5  
6 of this act.

7 (4) Caseworkers at existing local offices shall perform  
8 the following activities by appointment and on a drop-in basis:

9 (a) Help clients complete assistance and renewal  
10 applications;

11 (b) Screen clients for program eligibility;

12 (c) Interview clients for assistance eligibility and  
13 assistance renewal eligibility;

14 (d) Determine program eligibility of the client; and

15 (e) Answer client questions in-person.

16 (5) Department call centers for economic assistance  
17 programs shall take appointments for face-to-face help for clients  
18 regarding or relating to such assistance upon request of the  
19 client.

20 (6) Each existing local office shall be equipped with a  
21 reasonable number of computers, telephones, and scanning equipment  
22 for client use.

23 Sec. 3. (1) The Department of Health and Human Services  
24 shall provide high-quality services for clients who apply for or  
25 receive benefits under public benefit programs administered by the  
26 department.

27 (2) The department shall utilize department caseworkers

1 who are located in call centers, dedicated caseworkers, and  
2 specialized department employees or units who will provide  
3 in-person assistance to specific clients.

4 (3) Upon the request of the client, dedicated caseworkers  
5 shall, at a minimum, be utilized for persons with chronic physical  
6 or mental disorders and the elderly that require the provision of  
7 medical and personal care services on a recurring or continuing  
8 basis.

9 (4) Specialized department employees or units shall, at a  
10 minimum, be utilized for complex cases, including medicaid waiver  
11 cases, medicaid spousal impoverishment cases, disability cases, and  
12 other similar cases upon request of the client.

13 (5) The dedicated caseworkers and specialized department  
14 employees or units shall be placed in the existing local offices  
15 established or reestablished under section 2 of this act and shall  
16 be accessible to department caseworkers in call centers.

17 Sec. 4. (1) Community support specialists within the  
18 Department of Health and Human Services shall:

19 (a) Act as a liaison between the department and  
20 community-based organizations;

21 (b) Facilitate client assistance by community-based  
22 organizations;

23 (c) Train community-based organizations in how to help  
24 clients access economic assistance programs through the department  
25 web site; and

26 (d) Respond to client problems with the application  
27 process known as Access Nebraska or its successor.

1           (2) The department shall determine the appropriate  
2 numbers and hours of community support specialists but shall, at  
3 a minimum, employ eight community support specialists to perform  
4 the requirements of subsection (1) of this section. The community  
5 support specialists shall receive annual training in:

6           (a) Principles and practices of public administration;

7           (b) Procedure and policy development; and

8           (c) Federal and state laws, rules, regulations, and  
9 procedures pertaining to health and human services programs.

10           Sec. 5. (1) The Department of Health and Human Services  
11 shall enter into contracts with community-based organizations  
12 which allow the department to keep caseworkers present at the  
13 community-based organization at the times specified in the  
14 contract. A contract under this section shall specify sufficient  
15 times to allow caseworkers to:

16           (a) Screen and conduct interviews for assistance  
17 eligibility and assistance renewal;

18           (b) Assist clients with assistance applications and  
19 renewals;

20           (c) Receive assistance applications and renewals;

21           (d) Answer questions in person;

22           (e) Train and provide technical assistance to staff of  
23 community-based organizations; and

24           (f) Conduct face-to-face interviews with clients by  
25 appointment and on a drop-in basis.

26           (2) In addition to the requirements specified in  
27 subsection (1) of this section, each such contract shall allow the

1 community-based organization to:

2 (a) Provide quality, accurate information relating to  
3 economic assistance programs that are targeted at populations known  
4 to have low participation rates in or difficulty accessing such  
5 assistance programs;

6 (b) Provide quality outreach to clients in the target  
7 populations who utilize economic assistance programs;

8 (c) Assist clients in scheduling appointments with  
9 caseworkers at a community-based organization facility or local  
10 office that provides access to economic assistance programs,  
11 whichever the client prefers;

12 (d) Assist with organization of information required for  
13 economic assistance application or renewal; and

14 (e) Negotiate fair compensation for services provided to  
15 applicants for economic assistance benefits as described in this  
16 section.

17 (3) The department shall maintain a sufficient number  
18 of contracts to provide access to assistance for all Nebraska  
19 citizens in establishing and maintaining eligibility for economic  
20 assistance programs. In determining the number of contracts with  
21 community-based organizations, the department shall, at a minimum,  
22 consider:

23 (a) The geographic distance applicants would be required  
24 to travel to meet with a caseworker in person and how to minimize  
25 that distance;

26 (b) The volume of economic assistance cases in the  
27 service area and how to adequately serve those cases;

1           (c) The number of clients in an area who have difficulty  
2 in verbal and written communication due to hearing or vision  
3 impairment, language barriers, or literacy challenges and how to  
4 accommodate their needs;

5           (d) The community-based organization's ability to serve  
6 the need; and

7           (e) The number of existing local offices in the service  
8 area.

9           Sec. 6. The Department of Health and Human Services  
10 shall fulfill the requirements of sections 1 to 5 of this act  
11 by September 1, 2012. The department shall train community-based  
12 organizations by September 1, 2012. The department shall report  
13 back to the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature  
14 by September 15, 2012, regarding the implementation of sections  
15 1 to 5 of this act, including, but not limited to, the reasons  
16 for the department's determinations of the appropriate number of  
17 staff and hours pursuant to section 2 of this act and the number  
18 of community-based organization contracts pursuant to section 5 of  
19 this act.