

## **LB 825: ENSURING APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

### **Overview**

Nebraskans deserve government that works. Government programs should be responsible and responsive to Nebraskans. *LB 825 aims to ensure access to public programs for those that need them, especially for individuals who are elderly, disabled, or have other barriers.*

### **Background**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for managing public programs in Nebraska, including screening clients for eligibility, answering questions, and generally managing client cases. In the past, HHS had full-time local offices and caseworkers dedicated to individual clients.

Delivery of services changed when HHS created the ACCESS Nebraska system, which led to the closing of or reduction in local office responsibilities, as well as the total elimination of dedicated caseworkers. Clients are encouraged to apply online and communicate with call center workers. This has created some challenges for clients, such as difficulty for people who do not have computer skills to use the on-line form, barriers to accessing community based organization services, and confusion about complex rules.

LB 825 would change the duties and availability of staff at local offices, and would permit dedicated caseworkers for complex cases.

### **How it Works**

-A total of 25 local offices would be open 40 hours per week, all over Nebraska. Each local office will be equipped with computers and other technology for clients. The office would be modeled after an initiative in Indiana where “storefront” HHS offices provide basic assistance to clients.

-Staff at the local offices would help clients complete applications, perform interviews, determine eligibility, and answer questions.

-Local offices will have a goal of completing application processing for SNAP (food stamps) and Medicaid within 24 hours of application.

-Dedicated caseworkers will be assigned to clients with complex cases, such as clients that require long-term care. Other clients would continue to use the on-line application and call center. Anyone could use a phone, computer, or fax machine as needed for public benefits application or renewal.

### **The Benefits to Nebraska**

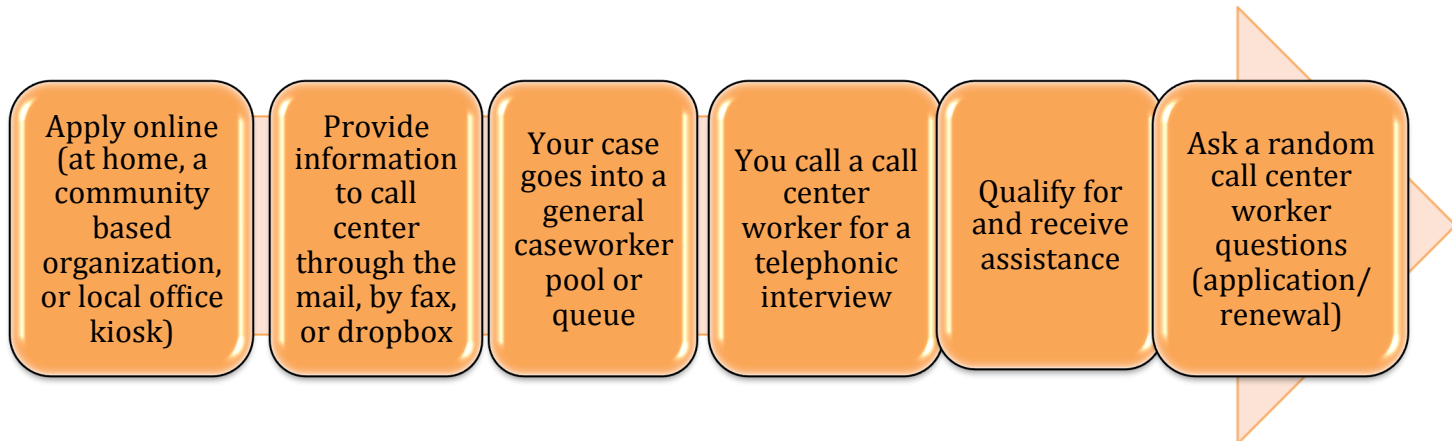
- Efficiencies created through the modernized system would continue.

-Clients will have the option of utilizing in person services in their own community, decreasing frustration and alleviating pressure on community based organizations such as libraries and aging services centers.

-Clients that have complex cases will have a worker assigned to them, so that decisions are accurate and client needs are met.

*For more information, contact Jennifer Carter, Nebraska Appleseed (402) 438-8853.*

The ACCESS Nebraska Service Delivery Model



“Hybrid” Model under LB 825

