



**ABOUT NEBRASKA DHHS**

In any emergency, including when the health of the public is at stake, communication becomes the most valuable asset. When experiencing a natural, biological or man-made disaster, or encountering a major health crisis, Nebraska DHHS must provide real-time information to the public, media outlets, and its providers.

“We help people live better lives through effective health and human services.” Helping people live better lives is Nebraska DHHS’ mission. It describes what the department does every day. Utilizing GovDelivery’s digital subscription management solution allows DHHS officials to communicate quickly and effectively with all stakeholders simultaneously via email and text message, on day-to-day basis or in the case of an emergency.

*“GovDelivery was easy to implement and did not require additional staff. It is a cost effective and seamless addition to our Website offerings. It provides subscribers a way to receive the information they want, when they want it and to make changes to their preferences at their own discretion.”*

- Greg Votava,  
Public Information Officer/Webmaster,  
Nebraska DHHS

## Nebraska DHHS Enhances Emergency Outreach through Direct Communication to Stakeholders

### Situation

As a part of its mission to help people live better lives, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) ([www.hhs.state.ne.us](http://www.hhs.state.ne.us)) established a set of operating principles outlining how employees should carry out this mission: the “Five Cs”. The set of principles includes cooperation, collaboration, customer service, confidence, and communication. DHHS demonstrates the importance of communication through keeping people informed; listening actively; being open and accessible; and ensuring that accurate, timely, and complete information reaches all concerned individuals.

Nebraska DHHS identified a need to improve their emergency communications; however, in addition to setting a goal of efficiency in providing constituents with real-time information, the agency had also been struggling with the increasing costs of printing and postage. A number of DHHS program areas had been instructed to look for solutions capable of relieving these expenses.

### Solution

On March 6, 2008, Nebraska DHHS launched GovDelivery’s Digital Subscription Management (DSM) system and became a part of an influential group of government agencies with a focus on proactive communication with the public and other healthcare stakeholders. GovDelivery’s DSM system is an automated system that uses email, text messaging or RSS to keep citizens informed when new information is available on health topics of interest.

The DHHS Communications and Legislative Services Section (CLS) first learned of GovDelivery’s Digital Subscription Management Service in early 2006, while working on improving their emergency planning efforts. In late 2007, the Division of Medicaid and Long Term Care approached CLS with the need to cut back on the cost of doing paper mailings to providers. The Health and Human Services agency recognized GovDelivery as a solution for both of these needs.

The first review of the system was by CLS and the webmaster to see if the system would support the agencies communication needs, as well as serve as an efficient solution and an easy-to-manage system. The secondary review was done by the technology team to be sure that there would be no conflict with existing technology platforms. Finally, the proposal went to the agency’s Chief Operating Officer for cost and ROI considerations and then to the Chief Executive Officer for final approval. The final decision to move forward with GovDelivery was supported by the easy implementation with other technologies, dramatic overall cost savings, and seamless integration with the existing website.

## PROGRESS

Since launching GovDelivery in March 2008 Nebraska DHHS has:

- Sent more than 1,185,000 emails to subscribers.
- Signed up more than 11,200 subscribers with an average of more than 10 subscription items per subscriber.
- Incorporated 215 subscription topics including:
  - Health Alerts
  - Emergency Updates
  - “Seconds to Better Health” Audio Series
  - Flu – Weekly Report
  - State Advisory Committee Public Meetings

*\*Results as of April 2010*

## GOVDelivery

GovDelivery is the world's leading provider of government-to-citizen communication solutions. Our Digital Subscription Management solution is a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform that provides organizations a fully-automated, on-demand public communication system.

## Analysis

Nebraska DHHS utilizes email updates and alerts for topics such as News Releases, Health Alerts, Hot Topics, and Disasters and Emergencies; text messages become increasingly important as news breaks regarding emergency situations. An example of how Nebraska DHHS is using GovDelivery to communicate messages to subscribers who have shown interest is their newest feature webpage ([dhhs.ne.gov/newsroom/features/SevereStorms/](http://dhhs.ne.gov/newsroom/features/SevereStorms/)), specifically designed to communicate to citizens the resources available for coping with tornadoes and severe storms.

GovDelivery provided an opportunity to achieve an additional goal of Nebraska's DHHS: to develop a base of subscribers from the general public. This target was one that had remained virtually untouched by agency communications, as it included individuals that most likely would not be on any of their current mailing lists. Their current mailing lists consisted of healthcare providers and other health professionals. In the event of an emergency, the agency was only able to communicate with informed audiences, who were generally already made aware of the situation through alternate channels. Through GovDelivery, DHHS is able to leverage all website visitors, in terms of future communications, but promoting the subscription service and making sign-up easy.

## Results

As email alerts increase traffic to [www.hhs.state.ne.us](http://www.hhs.state.ne.us), more people become aware of emergency and health information. Rather than emergency and health communication outreach being solely through and dependent upon the media, important messages during times of crises are sent directly and immediately to individuals. For example, vital information regarding general safety tips and the effects severe storms and flooding have on water quality and food safety was released via GovDelivery email alerts during recent weather-related emergencies.

“During the recent Midwest storms (June 5, 2008) that occurred in Nebraska we were able to utilize GovDelivery very effectively in getting emergency information out to the public. DHHS became a ‘one-stop-shop’ for emergency information and Web users received notices when the information was updated.”

Since the initial pilot of GovDelivery, the Division of Medicaid and Long Term Care is considering the system their sole means of communication with providers. The Public Health Division has since made the decision to discontinue printing of all newsletters, instead making them available online with promotion via GovDelivery. The return on investment is substantial for DHHS, as they are not only cutting costs on printing and postage, but also relieving their customers of some of the stress and fear that is generally associated with emergency situations and health scares by providing pertinent and up-to-date information.

To receive email updates from Nebraska's DHHS, go to [www.hhs.state.ne.us](http://www.hhs.state.ne.us) or [dhhs.ne.gov/subscriptions](http://dhhs.ne.gov/subscriptions).