



December 1, 2016

Patrick O'Donnell, Clerk of the Legislature
State Capitol, Room 2018
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Mr. O'Donnell,

Nebraska Revised Statute 43-517 requires the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to report annually to the Legislature information regarding the Employment First participants who are engaged in an Associate's Degree educational program.

As of September 30, 2016, there were 125 Employment First participants engaged in an Associate's Degree educational program. The graduation rate of participants from the past year, October 1, 2015, through September 30, 2016, averages about 2 percent. Of the 125 participants 108 are making satisfactory progress in their educational pursuits. These participants spent an average of 5.17 months in education to fulfill their work requirement under the program.

The average hourly earnings for participants in the program from October, 1 2015, through September 30, 2016, was \$11.40 and 76 participants had been employed for at least six months while 137 had been employed for at least 12 months. Upon entry to the Employment First Program, five participants had an 11th grade education, 49 had a 12th grade education, 10 had received a certificate or diploma, seven had an Associate's Degree and two had a Bachelor's Degree.

The Department does not presently have formal activities that are intended to promote post-secondary education opportunities for our participants. On entry into Employment First, participants are assessed to determine their current educational levels, their career interests, as well as any barriers they may have to attain economic self-sufficiency. Following the assessment, case managers engage the participant in a discussion of activities in which they may participate to reach their ultimate career goal. When the participant's goal requires additional training or education, it is encouraged by the case manager and included as a work activity on the participant's plan.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 402-471-1757.

Respectfully,

Douglas J. Weinberg, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services