



December 1, 2022

The Honorable Pete Ricketts  
Governor of Nebraska  
State Capitol Room 2316  
Lincoln, NE 68509

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

RE: Employment First Participant Report

Dear Governor Ricketts and 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 engaged in an associate degree educational program.

The purpose of the Employment First Program is to provide temporary, transitional support for Nebraska families to achieve economic self-sufficiency through the provision of training, education, and employment preparation. To be eligible for the Employment First program, the work-eligible individual must meet eligibility requirements for the Aid to Dependent Children program.

In September 2022, 30 Employment First participants were engaged in an associate degree educational program. All 30 of these participants were making satisfactory progress in their educational pursuits. These participants spent an average of 2.33 months in education to fulfill their work requirements under the program. The graduation rate of participants from the past year, October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022, averages less than 1%.

From October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022, the average hourly earnings for participants in the program was \$14.72. In addition, the September 2022 report indicates during the 2021-2022 reporting year, 37 participants were employed for at least six months, while 40 were employed for at least 12 months.

Of the 37 former program participants employed as of September 2022, 35 reported their education levels:

- Two participants have less than a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade education;
- 13 have a 12<sup>th</sup>-grade education;

- 16 have received a certificate or diploma beyond high school;
- Three have an associate degree, and,
- One has a bachelor's degree.

The Department does not presently have formal activities intended to promote post-secondary education opportunities for our participants. Upon entry into Employment First, participants are assessed to determine current educational levels, career interests, and barriers to attaining economic self-sufficiency. Following an assessment, case managers engage the participant to decide on activities they may participate in to help them 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 service plan.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie Beasley".

Stephanie Beasley, Director  
Division of Children and Family Services