

Nebraska State Legislature

SENATOR RUSS KARPISEK

District 32
315 North Shimerda
PO Box 767
Wilber, Nebraska 68465
(402) 821-2909

Legislative Address:
State Capitol
PO Box 94604
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4604
(402) 471-2711
rkarpisek@leg.ne.gov



COMMITTEES

Chairperson - General Affairs
Agriculture
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs
Nebraska Retirement Systems
Executive Board
Reference

February 25, 2010

Senator E. Benjamin Nelson
720 Hart Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Nelson,

The Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Network has been working over the past five years to develop the resources to implement a Health Information Exchange system among Behavioral Health Providers in the Southeast Region of Nebraska. To date, more than \$3 million dollars has been committed to the project from Federal, State and Regional sources. Although the Behavioral Health Information Network is ready to implement the “core” of the data exchange system, an important component of the system remains beyond reach – i.e. the purchase of electronic medical record systems. Roughly half of the \$900,000 is still needed.

The Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Exchange is a 502 © 3 private nonprofit corporation that serves as a Regional Health Information Organization for providers of Behavioral Health Services (mental health and substance abuse services) in southeast Nebraska. The organization’s mission statement is to promote quality care through efficient, secure and confidential handling of data and patient information in order to provide seamless integrated patient care and access from multiple locations. The primary focus in the development and implementation of the behavioral health integrated information and data management system. The initial service area includes southeast Nebraska with the potential to expand the system statewide.

Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information has made significant progress in bringing health information technology to behavioral health providers in southeast Nebraska. The intended outcome of the health information technology system is building throughout Nebraska include:

- Improved quality of care and performance of behavioral health care providers, while controlling costs.

- Improved safety for behavioral health consumers and the public.
- Improved behavioral health consumer outcomes using evidence-based practices.
- Greater behavioral health consumer involvement in personal health care decisions.
- Enhanced public health and disease surveillance efforts.
- Improved access to behavioral health care.

As you may imagine, it will take multiple funding sources to fully implement such an extensive health information system. Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information has been successful in fundraising including grant awards and contributions from the following sources:

- Health Resources Services Administrations – Rural Health Network Development Grant of \$540,000 over three years.
- Agency for Health Care Research and Quality Ambulatory Care grant to improve Chronic Disease Outcomes grant of 41.2 million over three years.
- Region V Systems contribution of \$600,000 for system development
- Nebraska Information Technology Commission award of \$40,000 for hardware acquisition

For your information, Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information is participating in the State of Nebraska application for Stimulus Fund to develop information exchange capabilities; these funds cannot be used to acquire Electronic Medical Record software applications. Region V Systems has committed \$429,000 in resources to help providers acquire the software; this is roughly **half** of what is needed. Although the providers have expressed a willingness to contribute toward this purchase, as well as the ongoing costs of maintaining the system, additional funding to help acquire these systems is needed.

Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information is requesting your support, and I am asking that \$250,000 be earmarked in federal funding to further support behavioral health treatment organizations technology efforts. If awarded, this funding would assist the following agencies in EHR acquisition and implementation costs: Community Mental Health Center of Lincoln/Lancaster County; Blue Valley Behavioral Health, CenterPointe, St. Monica's, Cornhusker Place and Houses of Hope.

I sincerely hope that you will join Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Exchange to improve behavioral health services through a robust health information exchange system and support the earmarking of \$250,000 in federal funding. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Senator Russ Karpisek
Legislative District 32