



Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Network, Inc.

1645 N St. • Lincoln, NE • 68508 • (402)441-4388

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February 12, 2010

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Senator Nelson
440 North 8th Street
Suite 120
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Senator Nelson:

The Southeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Information Exchange (SNBHIN) is a 501 (c)3 private non-profit corporation that serves as a Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) 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 is the development and implementation of a behavioral health integrated information and data management system. The initial service area includes Southeast Nebraska with the potential to expand the system statewide.

Over the past several years, SNBHIN has made significant progress in bringing health information technology to behavioral health providers in Southeast Nebraska. The intended outcomes of the health information technology system SNBHIN is building 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. SNBHIN has been successful in fund raising including grant awards and contributions from the following sources:

- Health Resources Services Administration – 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 \$1.2 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

Although SNBHIN is participating in the State of Nebraska application for Stimulus Funding to develop information exchange capabilities, these funds cannot be used to acquire Electronic Medical Record applications. Although Region V Systems has committed \$429,000 in resources to help providers acquire the systems, 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.

Senator Nelson, SNHBIN is requesting your support to propose an earmark of \$267,500 in federal funding to further support behavioral health treatment organizations in their health information technology efforts. If awarded, the 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.

We sincerely hope that you will join us in our efforts to improve behavioral health services through a robust health information exchange system. I would appreciate the opportunity to further brief you on this project. If you should have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Wende Baker
Network Director