

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Receives 2026 NASTA Impact Award for Excellence in Human Services**

**NEW ORLEANS, LA — August 26, 2026:** The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) and the National Association of State TANF Administrators (NASTA), an APHSA affinity group, are pleased to recognize the **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)** as the recipient of the **2026 NASTA Impact Award for Excellence in Human Services**.

The award was presented during APHSA's [Economic Mobility and Well-Being \(EMWB\) Conference](#), taking place August 23–26 in New Orleans, and recognizes Nebraska DHHS for its innovative use of technology and partnerships to expand access to English language learning and job readiness services for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants across the state.

Under the leadership of TANF Program Manager II Will Varicak, Nebraska DHHS and its Employment First contractor, Equus Workforce Solutions, leveraged technology to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Learning (ELL) opportunities alongside job readiness supports for hundreds of TANF participants with limited English proficiency. The effort helped address gaps in communities where local and educational providers lacked the capacity or resources to meet the growing need for these services.

By making these resources more accessible, Nebraska DHHS has helped participants remain engaged in meaningful, TANF-approved work activities, resulting in high participation rates, fewer sanctions, and measurable gains in English language and job readiness skills. As participants have become eligible to enter or reenter the workforce, the initiative has also contributed to higher rates of employment.

The initiative demonstrates how technology and strong partnerships can help overcome local resource limitations while keeping individual needs at the center of service delivery. By expanding access to skill-building opportunities, Nebraska DHHS is helping TANF participants prepare for employment while supporting greater stability for families across the state.

Congratulations to Nebraska DHHS on receiving the 2026 NASTA Impact Award and for its commitment to using innovation and collaboration to expand opportunities and strengthen outcomes for TANF participants and their families.

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**About APHSA:** The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) supports leaders from state, county, and city human services agencies to advance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities nationwide. As a bipartisan membership association, APHSA works with its members to generate pragmatic solutions grounded in lived experience. For more information, visit [aphsa.org](https://aphsa.org).

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