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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)

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**(Neb.)- DHHS Seeks \$2.1M For Neb. Public-Benefits Portal**



By: Jeremy Anderson Posted at: 03/26/2013 04:28 PM

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) - The Department of Health and Human Services is asking lawmakers for an additional \$2.1 million to help pay telephone-service costs for ACCESSNebraska, the state's public benefits portal.

Nebraska Children and Family Services director Thomas Pristow told lawmakers Tuesday that officials are working to reduce the costs and phone wait-times.

Officials predicted a cost savings when the system was launched in 2008, but Pristow says those estimates were too optimistic.

Pristow says wait-times and employee workloads at the call centers have been dropping. He says a decision to switch from a toll-free number to a local phone number for Lincoln residents is saving about \$1,000 a day.

Sen. John Harms of Scottsbluff says he still hearing complaints about the system from constituents, some of whom don't have computers or telephone access.