



Developmental Disability Services March Newsletter

Celebrate with Us!

3/03/2026 - Wear Orange for Developmental Disability Awareness Month

3/06/2026 - Employee Appreciation Day

3/20/2026 - Wear Crazy Socks for World Down Syndrome Day

3/26/2026 - Wear Purple for Epilepsy

3/30/2026 - Wear Black and White for World Bipolar Day

Events at a Glance

HASTINGS:

- 3/10 - Kiwanis Pancake Feed
- 3/16 - 3/20 - Spirit Week

GRAND ISLAND:

- 3/16 - 3/20 - Spirit Week
- 3/17 - St. Patrick's Day Party

KEARNEY:

- Adaptive Arts
- St. Patrick's Day Party

OBJECTIVES OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

- **Inclusion & Access:** Raising awareness about the importance of including people with I/DD in education, employment, and community activities.
- **Addressing Barriers:** Identifying and reducing physical, social, and attitudinal barriers that limit participation.
- **The Power of Support:** Highlighting how collective support systems make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities
- **Championing Rights & Independence:** Advocating for the right to live independently and participate fully in society



In recognition of Social Worker Day on 3/17/2026, we want to thank our Service Coordinators for their ongoing dedication to ensuring quality support for all in our services and beyond.

Team Talk

A LETTER FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Dear Individuals, Families, and Guardians,

We are excited to share important updates regarding our services. Recently, we have recognized that several individuals are attending less frequently and have shown impressive independence, successfully completing tasks without the assistance previously needed. This is a wonderful achievement and reflects their progress.

As a result, we have been in communication with some to determine if they continue to benefit from our services. For those who do not, we celebrate their accomplishments and are committed to supporting a smooth transition over the next 60 days. Our priority remains providing consistent, high-quality support to everyone who continues with us.

If you have questions or need support during this transition, please reach out. We appreciate your trust, patience, and partnership, and look forward to continued progress together.

Kindly,
Laura Schenk;



As we begin Developmental Disability Awareness Month this March, let us remember that every day, we're inspired by the incredible talents, resilience, and perspectives that people with disabilities bring to our community. Each person is amazing in their own way, and it's vital that we continue breaking down barriers so everyone can thrive. While we work daily to foster understanding and inclusion, this month shines a special light on the importance of raising awareness and strengthening relationships. We encourage everyone to take time to learn more about disabilities, get involved in advocacy, and participate in community events. Together, we can help make our neighborhoods more accessible, welcoming, and supportive for all.

MARCH 2026

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH



Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions that may affect how a person learns, communicates, moves, or interacts with the world. People with developmental disabilities have unique strengths, abilities, and goals, and deserve the same opportunities to live, work, and participate fully in their communities.

Why awareness matters:

Raising awareness helps promote understanding, inclusion, and respect. It encourages communities and workplaces to recognize abilities, remove barriers, and ensure people with developmental disabilities are valued and supported in all areas of life.

Join Us in Celebration

♥ Wear ORANGE with us on 3/3/2026 to kick off Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM)!

Community Connections

We are actively seeking community spaces in Grand Island, Hastings, or Kearney to host curriculum-based activities such as craft groups, cooking classes, financial guidance, and more. If you know of a location that would be ideal for these groups, clubs, or classes, please reach out to the Associate Director—we would love to build partnerships within our community.



! Awards for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. During March, DHHS will highlight the importance of giving all individuals meaningful opportunities to contribute and participate in education, employment, recreation, and civic engagement in their communities.

For the third consecutive year, individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and members of the developmental disabilities community across Nebraska have the opportunity to nominate individuals, providers, community leaders, and employers for one of four awards:

- **Individual Spotlight:** A person with a developmental disability who has overcome adversity to achieve or exceed their goals. This individual demonstrates a drive to improve, a desire for greater independence, and a commitment to making a difference in their own life and the lives of others.
- **Outstanding Provider:** An independent or agency provider who excels in delivering services. This provider strives for person-centered outcomes, fosters a welcoming culture, and goes above and beyond to support individuals with developmental disabilities in living their best lives as defined by them.
- **Community Leader:** A person or group of people who have dedicated their time (paid or unpaid) to helping individuals with developmental disabilities. These selfless leaders are committed to promoting independence and making positive changes, showcasing their passion for advancing individual lives.
- **Creative Employer:** A community employer who employs individuals with developmental disabilities. This employer goes above and beyond expectations to help employees thrive in their workplace. Their culture is open and innovative, fostering success for all employees.

Nominations are being accepted February 20 - March 6, 2026.

[Submit a Nomination](#)

Resource Roundup



UPCOMING TRAININGS

- 03/09 - CPR Refresher
- 03/12 - Med Aide Refresher
- 03/16 - DDS New Hire Orientation
- 03/18 - CPR Initial
- 03/19 - Med Aide Initial
 - Mandt TBD

Employee Updates

EMPLOYEES ON THE MOVE

Emma Meyer - Habilitation Specialist
GI and Hastings

DEPARTURES

Aaren Meyer - Program Specialist
Michael Brown - Hastings DSP
Karime Galindo - Hastings DSP
Yasmine Medina - Hastings DSP
Bear Nickles - Grand Island DSP

DDS Leadership

Associate Director

- Chelsie Blunt
- 402-831-7149

Director

- Laura Schenk
- 402-984-2566

Medical

Coordinator

- Shelli Calhoun
- 402-705-8828

Program Manager - Grand Island

- Lucas Skrdlant
- 308-850-9094

Program Manager - Hastings

- Dacia Wright
- 402-705-8269

Program Manager - Kearney

- Kim Anderson
- 308-830-2015

Shared Living Manager

- Tia Hayman
- 308-380-1071