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State Innovation Awards recognize two DHS programs

Efforts produce better outcomes for older Minnesotans, people with disabilities

Two Minnesota Department of Human Services efforts to improve the satisfaction and health outcomes of people served are among 10 winners of this year's Minnesota State Government Innovation Awards. The awards, which recognize innovation and service redesign in state government, are hosted by the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs. [Return to Community](#), one of the top three award winners, and [MnCHOICES](#) will be recognized in an award ceremony on July 30 at the Minnesota History Center.

“We are delighted with this recognition of two DHS reform initiatives that result in both better outcomes for people and better use of public dollars,” said Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson. “Groundbreaking reforms like these help make Minnesota a national leader in long-term care services.”

Return to Community, a collaboration between the Minnesota Board on Aging and DHS, helps people who are in a nursing home and are not yet on Medical Assistance return home if they wish. Candidates for the service – people who seems likely to be able to live at home with some help – are visited by Senior LinkAge Line community living specialists and asked if they want to return home. If so, the specialists work closely with the nursing facility staff to help make the discharge successful. Upon the return home, specialists follow up with participants for five years. Since 2010, the service has helped more than 2,200 Minnesotans return home from nursing homes.

Nursing home care is expensive – costing an average of \$180 per day – and is not paid by Medicare or private insurance except on a very limited basis. Many nursing home residents deplete their personal assets on care and become eligible for Medical Assistance. Reducing the amount of time they spend in a nursing home leaves more money in their pockets and reduces the need for public spending.

MnCHOICES is a change in both tools and processes to determine individuals' needs for long-term services and supports. It replaces three assessments with a comprehensive assessment and service planning process that can be tailored for people of all ages, disabilities and income levels. MnCHOICES uses a planning process that helps people make decisions about long-term services

and supports that help them live in their homes and communities. It also promotes equitable service access across Minnesota populations and geographic areas.

A complete list of this year's 10 winning projects is on the [Humphrey School of Public Affairs website](#).

-30-