



By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has relocated its office in Imperial, where it will be open several days a week.

Initially, HHS had planned to move the office and change it to a satellite office, which houses HHS, but is not staffed on a regular basis.

However, HHS Western Service Area Administrator Nathan Busch said in a letter to employees in June, "...it is clear that our division has a number of business needs and work tasks still needing to be completed. In view of these needs and the passing of LB 825, Social Services Workers and Case Aides...will be retained indefinitely."

LB 825 changed the HHS's plan to utilize only call centers for initial calls and to set up personal contact with clients. That would have left the Imperial office for use only by a caseworker from a call center, if it was determined that a client needed that face-to-face contact.

LB 825 said, in part, that "The Department of Health and Human Services shall staff multiple, integrated access points for economic assistance programs administered by the department in order to assure that Nebaskans who rely on such programs will be able to utilize them effectively.

"The department shall determine appropriate numbers and hours of staff for each existing local office based on a review of the need in each service area."

Those caseworkers and specialized department employees are to be accessible to department caseworkers in call centers.

Case Worker Julie Gockley is in the new office all day Monday and Tuesday, and Wednesday mornings.

The office is located next to the University of Nebraska Extension Service office at 135 W. 5th St. A handicapped accessible entrance has been built to the front door.

The move to the new office was made May 30 from the former office at 130 W. 4th St.

Gockley said that although she is available to clients, most are making initial contact with HHS by going online at accessnebraska.ne.gov or by calling (800) 383-4278.