



May 2026

## Spring into Action!

As the daylight grows longer and the weather warms up, there's a natural desire to embrace renewal. Just as nature is starting to bloom, the spring season offers us a unique opportunity to 'spring clean' our health routines and reset our goals. Enjoy this issue of the *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter which highlights some of the activities we enjoy most this time of year, including opportunities to make a difference in the community.



## May is Mental Health Awareness Month—Let's Prioritize Well-Being Together

This month, we're taking time to recognize the importance of mental well-being in our workplace and our daily lives. Mental health affects how we think, feel, work, and connect with others, and everyone experiences challenges at times.

Throughout May, we encourage you to:

- Pause and check in with yourself
- Reach out to colleagues with kindness and empathy
- Use available wellness resources and support tools
- Make space for healthy boundaries, rest, and balance

Small actions like taking a short walk, asking for help when needed, or simply listening to one another can make a meaningful difference.

Let's continue building a workplace where it's safe to talk about mental health, support one another, and remind ourselves no one needs to navigate challenges alone.

Every day, Health and Human Services staff play a vital role in promoting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities across Iowa. Whether working directly with the public or supporting programs behind the scenes, each member of our workforce contributes to a system that helps people feel seen, supported, and connected.

Behavioral health remains a central part of this mission. Many people in Iowa HHS experience stress, isolation, or emotional challenges, sometimes without knowing where to turn or feeling ready to ask for help. One of the most powerful things we can do, both as professionals and as community members, is to provide calm, respectful, and compassionate points of connection.

Simple actions make a difference: listening without judgment, offering clear information about available resources, and reminding individuals that support is always available when they are ready for it. These small, steady gestures help build trust and ensure people know how to access services.

Resources such as **Your Life Iowa**, **Iowa Warm Line**, and **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** offer confidential, round-the-clock support for anyone experiencing mental health or substance-related concerns. Sharing these resources widely within our teams, with partners, and in daily interactions helps remove stigma and opens the door for people to reach out when they need it most.

The **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** offers confidential resources to help State employees and eligible family members address challenges which may impact job performance, affect well-being, and take a toll on overall health. EAP services are provided at no cost to employees and eligible family members.

**Employee Assistance Program:** 800-833-3031 [www.EAPHelplink.com](http://www.EAPHelplink.com)

- **Company Code: IOWA**
- **Please remember the EAP line is open 24/7/365**

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text 988, or chat at [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org)

**Your Life Iowa:** 24/7 mental health, addictions and substance use support. Call 855-581-8111, Text 855-895-8398, Chat at [yourlifeiowa.org](http://yourlifeiowa.org)

**Iowa Warm Line:** 24/7 peer support for stress and emotional challenges. 844-775-9276

---

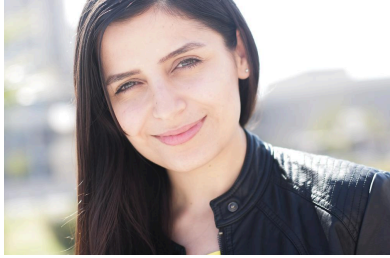
## Check Out Our Woodland Wildflowers in Real Time



The start of spring brings lots of new blooms. Did you know the Department of Natural Resources maintains a [Woodland Wildflowers and Reports page](#) where you can get an up-to-date list of woodland wildflowers currently in bloom? Check it out and plan to spend some time outdoors!

---

## Staff Spotlight



**Name:** Noor Ibrhaim

**Current Position:** Department of Inspections, Appeals & Licensing - Health & Safety

**Years with the State:** 1 year, 8 months

**My Healthy Choices:** Nutritious food and spices

"In 2011, I started having gastrointestinal problems due to my poor diet. I used to eat too much junk food, not enough fiber, and I took in a lot of caffeine. My doctor prescribed medications, but my symptoms continued to get worse. I was feeling stressed and lost, and started researching my symptoms. I read a lot about limiting carbohydrates, Paleo diets, Keto plans, and Fodmap. As I learned more, I started to add more proteins, veggies and fruits, and lots of healthy spices into my diet.

After six weeks of following these plans, I started to feel better. None of the medications I had taken helped me as much as these nutritious foods. I started cooking lots of recipes and realized my changes were really working. I read more and more about nutrition and in 2014 I obtained an associate degree as a nutrition advisor. I decided I wanted to help older people experiencing heart disease and diabetes learn more about the importance of eating healthy foods.

The biggest message I'd like to convey from my own health journey is that you truly ARE what you eat."

---

## Stay Alert: Scams That Target Employees

Scammers are increasingly targeting employees, posing as trusted contacts or using familiar workplace tools. A quick message, email, or phone call can look legitimate, but a few warning signs can help you spot a scam before it costs you time or money.

### Common scams to watch for:

- **Payroll or HR impersonation**

You may receive an email that looks like it's from HR asking you to "confirm" or "update" your direct deposit information. These messages often create urgency and include a link to a fake login page.

- **"Urgent request" from a supervisor**

A message that appears to come from a leadership position asking you to quickly purchase gift cards or send funds is a common scam. These messages often stress urgency and ask you to keep it confidential.



- **Fake job opportunities or side hustles**

Scammers may reach out with offers that promise high pay for little work. They may ask you to deposit a check and send a portion back, or pay upfront fees.

- **Benefits or open enrollment scams**

During benefits enrollment periods, scammers may pose as providers and ask for personal or financial information.

**How to protect yourself:**

- **Pause before you act.** Urgency is a red flag.
- **Verify the request.** Contact the person or department directly using known contact information, not what's in the message.
- **Be cautious with links and attachments.** Even if the message looks familiar.
- **Never send money or gift cards based on an email or text request.**

If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and take a moment to double-check. Reporting suspicious messages can also help protect your coworkers.

For more tips on recognizing and avoiding scams, visit [www.iowafraudfighters.gov](http://www.iowafraudfighters.gov).

---

## **Volunteering as a Stress Reliever: Unplug and Recharge**

In today's fast-paced, tech-driven world, the overwhelming flood of information from social media and news makes finding a way to disconnect and recharge more important than ever. Volunteering offers a unique way to unplug and replenish your energy.



When you volunteer, you immerse yourself in a task that requires focus and engagement, pulling your mind away from the worries that might be weighing you down. The shift in attention allows your brain to relax, which reduces the production of cortisol, the stress hormone. This mental break helps you return to work and life's responsibilities with a clearer mind and renewed energy.

Moreover, volunteering provides an opportunity to disconnect from technology. Spending time helping others in person rather than engaging in endless emails or scrolling through social media can help you feel more grounded. The physical act of volunteering forces you to be present in the moment, which can reduce feelings of burnout and exhaustion.

Volunteering also instills a sense of purpose, which can be a powerful stress reliever. Knowing that your efforts are making a difference can help you maintain perspective and approach daily challenges with more resilience.

Action Item: Commit to a regular volunteer activity as part of your self-care routine. It's a great way to unwind and recharge! Visit [Volunteer Iowa](#) to find volunteer opportunities near you.

---

## Take Action!

- Check your cancer risk. [ACS CancerRisk360](#)<sup>TM</sup> is a web-based app that assesses comprehensive cancer risk and offers personalized recommendations to empower individuals to reduce their cancer risk and improve overall health. It's a free, easy-to-use tool created by the American Cancer Society. In five to seven minutes, users answer a series of questions and receive personalized, evidence-based recommendations. Click [here](#) to learn more about the ACS CancerRisk360 app.
- Wherever you are in your mental health journey, the State of Iowa offers tools and benefits to support you and your family. In collaboration with Wellmark, DAS has three guides to assist you, your family, and those of you who work in a supervisory capacity:
  - [Healthy Everywhere Guide for Employees](#) - A guide to building better mental health at work and home.
  - [Healthy at Work Guide for Leaders](#) - A leader's guide that outlines important information to help you support employee well-being at work, at home and everywhere in between.
  - [Healthy at Home Parents' Guide](#) - A guide to supporting your child's mental health.
- [SEHARC](#) (State of Iowa Health and Recreation Committee) connects you with offers for discounted tickets to area events and hosts fun activities throughout the year. If you are interested in receiving information on these opportunities, complete [this form](#) to be added to SEHARC's mailing list or follow them on Facebook!
- Check out the DAS [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) for a number of on-demand seminars covering various topics related to health and well-being. EAP also offers confidential resources at no cost to help employees and eligible family members address challenges.
- For more great information, be sure to check out these Wellmark publications - [Wellmark Blue Magazine](#) and [Blue at Work](#).

---

The Healthy State of Iowa Employees quarterly newsletter is a cooperative effort between the Department of Administrative Services, Wellmark, and the State of Iowa Wellness Champions' Education and Engagement Committee. It's designed to help keep State of Iowa employees connected and informed of wellness opportunities around the state.

If you have questions or suggestions for future content, please contact us at [healthyemployees@iowa.gov](mailto:healthyemployees@iowa.gov).