

# Nebraska Telehealth Network Update

September 23, 2003

**Background.** On December 17, the Public Service Commission issued an order authorizing the support of telehealth from the Nebraska Universal Service Fund. The order directed the Nebraska Hospital Association to submit a plan which would define how the Nebraska Universal Service Fund support should be used to support rural health care providers. The Nebraska Hospital Association, with support from the NITC, developed and submitted a plan to the Public Service Commission in late May. The plan provided a starting point for discussions with the Public Service Commission.

**Recent Developments.** On September 17, representatives of the regional medical centers which will serve as hubs for the telehealth network, the Public Service Commission, the Nebraska Hospital Association, and the Nebraska Information Technology Commission met. The meeting addressed several concerns expressed by the Public Service Commission.

Representatives of the hub hospitals agreed to the following:

- Hub hospitals agree to use the communication standards, protocols and equipment that comply with or are interoperable with the standards established by the Nebraska Information Technology Commission.
- Hub hospitals certify that they have entered into an agreement with an agent designated by the Nebraska Public Service Commission to provide data to evaluate the performance of the Nebraska Telehealth Plan.
- The design of the telehealth system of the hub hospitals shall not eliminate the participation of any hospital or system because of proprietary equipment, operations systems or membership in associations or affiliation with a particular medical or technical organization.
- Hub hospitals have entered into an agreement or agreements to support hospitals licensed as Critical Access Hospitals or to provide clinical telehealth services, telehealth educational programs or teleradiology services.
- Hub hospitals have entered into an agreement to allow any hospital on the network to connect to another hospital.

Efforts are also being made to incorporate bioterrorism preparedness into the plan for the Nebraska Telehealth Network. The Nebraska Hospital Association has received financial support for further development of plans for the Nebraska Telehealth Network.