

Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Library Profile

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Today the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Library provides virtual access to scholarly and professional information for Department employees 24 hours a day. During business hours the three librarians connect DHSS employees with ideas, information, and innovative programming to empower all to provide quality services to Delawareans. They also support the public's health information needs through reference assistance, access to the print collection and library programs.

Until 2015, the unit was a medical library serving the information needs of doctors, nurses, researchers and other employees of the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, the Delaware Psychiatric Center and their predecessor organizations.

In 2016, following a brief closure and a Department-wide needs assessment, the Secretary expanded the library's scope to include all eleven divisions of DHSS and the public. The mission of DHSS is to improve the quality of life for Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. The DHSS Library supports all aspects of the mission.

Why Expand the Library's Scope?

To better understand the information needs of DHSS and generate stakeholder buy-in, a needs assessment was undertaken in 2015 in cooperation with the Delaware Division of Libraries. The joint needs assessment inquired about gaps in existing information services and resources, priorities for services and resources needed by employees and the level of department interest in these services and resources. Response to the survey was high, with 797 responses from approximately 4,300 employees. The Divisions of Social Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health, and Public Health provided the most responses.

The needs assessment found that DHSS staff routinely require information that is not readily available on the internet. They depend upon access to reliable, authoritative resources to fulfill their job responsibilities and provide quality care to Delaware residents. Some employees were purchasing individual books and subscriptions to meet their own needs, but that approach did not meet the Department's needs.

Topics of interest included: behavioral health, social work, mental health, public health, management training, case management, leadership, policy, administration, data management and wellness. These areas continue to guide our activities.

Specific services and resources desired included:

- Desktop access to online library resources;
- Access to computers and quiet study spaces;
- Training materials, eBooks, online peer-reviewed articles, print books, journals and trade publications, patient-education sheets, evidence based clinical decision-making tools, clinical assessment tools, and point of care guides;

- Guides to suggested websites, electronic resources and library materials; and
- Virtual reference services.

Division directors also desired the library to:

- Provide current, quality information to contribute to evidence-based outcomes, supported by standards of care;
- Contribute to employees' professional growth and development;
- Help employees increase their information literacy; and
- Foster interagency collaboration among DHSS and community partners, for example work with the Delaware Division of Libraries.

Responding to the Needs Assessment, 2016 - Present

Most of the items brought out by the needs assessment were addressed after the results were gathered. The directions set at that time continue to guide the library's activities today. One-click access to the library's website and electronic resources is through a desktop icon on all DHSS computers. Remote access to electronic resources for employees working off-site is available upon request. Since 2016, DHSS employees have accessed library resources, services and librarians tens of thousands of times.

Thousands of electronic journals, eBooks and other professional materials form the majority of the library's collections so employees throughout the state can easily use them. Current materials are routinely added, keeping collections up to date and relevant. Books and DVDs are added to the collection through purchases and donations. These items can be borrowed by employees and the public.

Librarians regularly create electronic guides to information resources and subjects of interest and connect with users through newsletters and blog posts. Research and reference assistance through email, phone and in-person meetings help employees complete job responsibilities and provide quality care to Delawareans.

Collaboration with other organizations inside and outside of the Department strengthens the resources and services the DHSS Library provides. Work with partners inside the Department such as the Divisions of Public Health and Substance Abuse and Mental Health ensures that the library provides resources they need and helps the library reach potential users. The library borrows journal articles for employees from other medical libraries through a reciprocal lending program through the National Library of Medicine. Participation in the Delaware Library Consortium and work with the Delaware Division of Libraries make the library's book collection available to the public and supports other library activities.

Training and programming are another way the library meets the needs assessment desires. Librarians developed a range of programs and training offerings over the last four years. One with a large public health focus is the annual DHSS Research, Innovation and Humanity Day. This judged poster session event, coordinated by the library, brings Department employees together to share recent projects and network with colleagues.

The library's physical location was remodeled in 2015-16 to include shared computers, Wi-Fi, group and individual study areas, and a computer training lab, as well as providing greater access to the book and journal collections.

Members of the public can find the DHSS Library's books in the Delaware Library Catalog and borrow them through their local public library. Librarians also provide answers to health-related questions through email, phone and the Ask-A-Librarian DE service.

Plans for a new needs assessment are in development.

Pandemic Response

Since much of the DHSS Library's collection was already electronic, pivoting to all-virtual services when the COVID-19 pandemic began was easier for the library than for some other DHSS units. Electronic outreach about library resources and services increased to raise employee awareness, and to share how remote access to the library's electronic resources could be arranged.

Librarians built an online information hub to provide DHSS employees, managers and supervisors with forms, links and other information needed as many employees transitioned to telework during the State of Emergency.

Librarians also built an extensive webpage gathering links to COVID-19 research portals from scientific journal publishers, government agencies, universities and others and publicized these through the library community.

Visits to the library's website and use of electronic resources, especially the pages described above, jumped dramatically in March and April 2020.

Contacting the DHSS Library

The DHSS Library is found online at <https://guides.lib.de.us/dhsslibrary>. Librarians can be reached at dhsslibrary@delaware.gov, (302) 255-2789. The library is in the Springer Building on the DHSS Herman Holloway campus, 1901 N. DuPont Highway, New Castle, DE. As of August 2020, the physical site is temporarily closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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