

Government to Citizen

Healthy Arkansas Initiative

URL <http://www.arkansas.gov/ha/home.html>

Healthy Arkansas is Governor Huckabee's pioneering initiative to improve the health of all Arkansas residents while reducing the burdensome \$3 billion dollar annual cost of the state's Medicaid program. This comprehensive project includes a robust website with online services to clearly define specific opportunities for citizens to improve their health. Arkansas bears a burden greater than the national average of chronic disease, including diabetes, stroke, lung and heart disease, and cancer. The Healthy Arkansas website is a valuable resource for finding smoke-free restaurants or walking trails, order free health books or find a "health buddy" online, plus many other services.

Governor Huckabee directed the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a pilot project for the 600,000 Arkansans who receive Medicaid benefits. The goal was to better understand how providing physical and nutritional education impacts citizens and healthcare. This program provided a better understanding for long-term care for diseases such as diabetes. For example, one diabetic patient reduced her doctor visits from every other week to once every three months, a substantial reduction in Medicaid costs.

This initiative began at the state level and experienced rapid growth with tremendous success and national exposure in publications such as USA Today, Time and People Magazine as well as ABC News. The National Governor's Association (NGA) quickly adopted the Healthy Arkansas initiative for the rest of the country renaming it "Healthy America". It also prompted the NGA's Healthy States Grant Program, providing challenge grants to help state governments develop and implement worksite and/or community wellness programs related to Healthy America.

New Online Services

Free Healthy Guide book and Healthy Baby book –The Healthy Guide books contain information on eating right, exercising and quitting smoking, plus great health resources available in each Arkansas county. Healthy Baby book encourages early and continuous prenatal care in order to reduce the incidence of low and very low birth weight babies.

Trails for life – First one step, then another and pretty soon you are walking or hiking a healthy trail for life. You can find the trail that is just right for you through a statewide walking trail search.

Healthy Restaurant Search – "Stop Digging Your Grave with a Knife and Fork" is the title of one of Governor Huckabee's books but is also good advice for anyone who wants a long and healthy life. Eating right at home is a start but eating right when you go out is also essential. You can easily find the best restaurant for you and your family by entering a restaurant name, selecting a city or an award level bestowed in the Healthy Restaurant Awards program.

Find a buddy – Exercising is much easier with friends to encourage and support you, along with other resources close to your home. You can easily connect with someone sharing your health goals and find resources in your community by conducting an online search selecting program type and/or county.

A. Business problem and solution including length of time in operation

Arkansas was ranked as one of the least healthy states in the nation and the cost of the state's Medicaid program was soaring to more than \$3 billion annually.

The infrastructure for the Healthy Arkansas initiative enables state agencies to update content published on the website and displayed within the online applications in real-time. Thus allowing taxpayers access to the most current information available. A scalable infrastructure allows future enhancements to be easily made reducing the cost to taxpayers since the current coding can be leveraged for generations to come.

This program has been in production for 1 year.

B. Significance of the improvement of the operation of government

Rapidly rising Medicaid costs are the single largest item in the state budget other than education.

Creating and managing a state Medicaid budget benefiting more than 600,000 people is a daunting task to say the least. Now state government can more accurately forecast long-term Medicaid costs and allocate monies to key areas to improve the health of all citizens of Arkansas. Prior to this initiative, Arkansas' Medicaid costs were increasing by 9% annually totaling more than \$3 billion. Even a tiny reduction in the cost of Medicaid programs or the percentage of growth in those programs results in millions of tax dollars saved annually.

Once the Healthy Arkansas initiative achieved great success, the NGA (National Governor's Association) quickly adopted this program nationwide and named it Healthy America. Other states throughout the country are able to leverage the investment made by the state of Arkansas by easily implementing the model established by Governor Mike Huckabee. Thus reducing the time required to implement a multi-agency initiative and quickly reduce their Medicaid costs as well.

C. Benefits realized by service recipients, taxpayers, agency or state

Education is paramount for citizens and state government to not only understand but also stay abreast of the latest healthcare issues and ways to live healthier lives. Prior to Governor Huckabee pioneering this initiative, taxpayers had limited forums to obtain information regarding the latest health issues or pending legislation to improve their quality of life. Now taxpayers have an easy to use, centralized forum providing instant information online ranging from nutrition to the latest developments such as the Clean Air Act.

This program provided a better understanding for long-term care for diseases such as diabetes. For example, a 55-year old diabetic patient completed a one year program and reduced her doctor visits from every other week to every three months. Thus reducing Medicaid costs.

New Online Services

Free Healthy Guide book and Healthy Baby book –The Healthy Guide books contain information on eating right, exercising and quitting smoking, plus great health resources available in each Arkansas county. Healthy Baby book encourages early and continuous

prenatal care in order to reduce the incidence of low and very low birth weight babies. A two-step order process provides convenient efficient service to citizens.

Trails for life –You can find the trail that is just right for you through a statewide walking trail search. You have two options to complete the search. You can simply select a particular county within a state map or create a query by selecting criteria such as trail type, region of state, difficulty and/or county.

Healthy Restaurant Search –The Healthy Arkansas Healthy Restaurant Award was created to recognize restaurants that have gone the extra mile to help us live a healthy lifestyle even when we eat out. The award is given to restaurants that meet high standards in food preparation and safety while providing nutritional food and smoke-free environments. You can easily find the best restaurant for you and your family by entering a restaurant name, selecting a city or an award level.

Find a buddy –You can easily find resources in your community by conducting an online search selecting program type and/or county. The search instantly returns the community organization, program name and corresponding categories such as physical activities, tobacco and/or nutrition, making it easy for you to connect with someone sharing your healthy goals.

D. Realized return on investment, short-term/long-term payback (include summary calculations)

A reduction in Arkansas medicaid cost of only 1% will result in \$30 million in annual savings. $\$3 \text{ Billion} \times .01 = \30 Million

By reducing only the rate of growth by just one percent, the program could help save taxpayers \$3 Million annually. Current rate of growth at 9% annually equates to \$27 Million, reducing growth to 8% would equate to \$24 Million. $\$27 \text{ Million} - \$24 \text{ Million} = \$3 \text{ Million}$ in taxpayer savings.

Since the inception of the Healthy Arkansas Initiative, the website averages 30,000 visits per month. The Healthy Arkansas website along with online applications such as healthy restaurant search, trails for life, find a buddy and free healthy book orders were all developed at NO charge to the agency or taxpayers.

The time to process free healthy book orders now takes 2-3 business days instead of 2-3 weeks.

The healthy baby book has helped over 200,000 women have a better pregnancy.

This initiative also resulted in a statewide ban on smoking in the work place and in restaurants creating tremendous health benefits and potentially saving tremendous amounts of taxpayer support for medical expenses for generations to come.