

# State of the Web

N.C. Department of Health and Human Services  
January 2010

*This fourth annual "State of the Web" report provides an overview of achievements from last year, and what is on the horizon.*

*Use of really simple syndication (RSS) makes the department more effective at delivering our message: traffic to DHHS press releases doubled when RSS was put in place.*

*Governor Bev Perdue and State Health Director Jeff Engel have played starring roles in videos on the DHHS home page, warning North Carolinians about H1N1 flu and encouraging flu shots.*



## Accomplished in 2009

- **Four Divisions Have New Websites:** Websites for Rural Health and Community Care, Budget and Analysis, State Operated Healthcare Facilities, and Information and Resource Management are designed in the department's look and feel. Information was rewritten where needed to be more task- and audience-specific.
- **Multimedia Comes to DHHS:** The department unveiled its YouTube website in June. New videos are regularly appearing in the department's and the Spanish home pages. Public service announcements are given a second life on our video library and YouTube pages. Also, an agreement with the N.C. Agency for Public Telecommunications provides the department with clips from OpenNET shows to embed on our sites.
- **Redesign of All Divisions and Offices:** In July, Public Affairs unveiled a plan to redesign all division and office websites by July of 2010. Public Affairs is supporting 20 divisions, offices and facilities in moving to the new website templates, and reframing information to be more audience-specific and task-focused. Divisions and offices have written web charters and outlines, and are working on "wireframes" to spell out exact content of each page.
- **Commitment to Accessibility Extends to Video:** The website project extended its commitment to accessibility for all people to our video offerings. Transcripts are provided for all videos, and all videos that can be captioned *are* captioned.
- **RSS Feeds:** RSS feeds were instituted for all English and Spanish press releases. Anyone can subscribe and be notified of a new release. Traffic to our press releases more than doubled as a result.
- **Training:** All division webmasters using the new templates received two training sessions, phone support, and a detailed training document.
- **Spanish Site:** Great strides were made in the department's Spanish site with new content for flu, fish consumption, and diabetes. The Hispanic public information officer has been trained to be the content manager and webmaster for this site.
- **Search Engine Optimization:** Optimizing DHHS websites for commercial search engines is part of the website redesign process. Public Affairs uses sophisticated tools and techniques to ensure the searching public finds valuable pages buried in our website.

## Next Steps:

- **Division and Office Incorporation:** All divisions and offices have made great progress toward redesigning their websites. The first to unveil their sites in 2010 are expected to be Vital Records, Services for the Blind, Economic Opportunity, Oral Health, Women's and Children's Health, Walter B. Jones Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center, and O'Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center. Public Affairs is working with the remaining divisions and offices to have their redesigned sites in Summer of 2010.
- **Usability Testing:** Usability tests ensure that a site makes sense to the intended users, and that they can accomplish the primary tasks on the website. Usability testing will be employed to hone sites/functionality that have high traffic and to help visitors with key tasks.
- **Facility and School Incorporation:** Divisions and offices that have multiple websites are concentrating on their "home page" sites. After these are live, facility, school, and program sites will be addressed. This effort will begin in Fall 2010.
- **Mobile DHHS:** The project is working to make the DHHS website optimized for use on mobile devices, such as cellphones.
- **Document Collections:** Solutions to make it easier to post document collections, such as newsletters, are being explored. The goal is to allow sorting by date or by keyword, and allowing submissions by many authors (not just webmasters).
- **Social Media:** Public Affairs will convene a workgroup to examine the use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, and to create a policy for their use.
- **Keeping Content Fresh:** Work to create the primary DHHS audience pages (Individuals and Families, Employees and Local Agencies, Partners and Providers, and Facts and Figures) was completed in 2008. It is time to relook at that content and ensure audience needs are being met, and that they reflect current valuable content on division/office websites. Public Affairs will use surveys, usability tests, and brainstorming sessions with web content managers to "tend the garden" to keep the DHHS website vibrant and fresh.
- **Division Writer Training and Website Maintenance:** As each website is completed, new content will be written by a distributed group of writers. Writer training for web content managers, public information officers, and division/office web content contributors will help ensure the division/office websites hang together as these inevitable updates occur. Processes for web content managers and webmasters are being written to ensure the navigation is appropriately updated as new material is incorporated, that crucial pages are updated regularly (such as pages with contacts), and that topical content does not get stale.
- **County Map:** Numerous divisions in the department have county contacts on their websites. The website project will develop a clear, uniform, accessible county contact list with map to provide names and phone numbers across all 100 counties, so that the county list operates the same regardless of the division or office.
- **Google Maps:** Directions to our offices, facilities and schools could be facilitated with use of a tool such as Google Maps. Public Affairs will convene a workgroup to work out the issues of using such tools and to write best practices for employing them consistently across the department.

*The newly redesigned Vital Records website will explain in plain language the process for obtaining an North Carolina birth, death, marriage or divorce certificates.*

*The department's Web Manager is Lois Nilsen, Office of Public Affairs. For website guidance documents and project updates, go to: [ncdhhs.gov/redesignproject](http://ncdhhs.gov/redesignproject) .*

