

# Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) Transformation Efforts

*January 2023*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Department of Human Services (DHS) merged on July 1, 2022, to form one agency, Iowa HHS. On July 1, 2023, Iowa HHS welcomed additional programs and services as part of the Governor's State Alignment Initiative. The goal of this new state agency structure is to build a true continuum and ease navigation through the HHS system and inform client services with public health data. Below is a high-level summary of key Iowa HHS efforts aimed at transforming our system.

## **GOAL: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

### **HHS SYSTEM ALIGNMENT**

Iowa HHS is continuing its commitment to operating with efficiency and effectiveness. Iowa HHS is evaluating the HHS System and its local structures to develop a model that balances local control and local flexibility to meet HHS system objectives with clear goals and outcomes. HHS will use a systems approach to design and support an integrated local HHS system that includes multidisciplinary partnerships to maximize resources, increase reach, and better meet the needs of individuals, families, and communities.

### **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES ASSESSMENT**

Child protective services (CPS) suffers from high turnover and operational inefficiencies. The result of this is less time with families and missed opportunities for better outcomes. In November 2022 the Department contracted with an independent agency, the Change and Innovation Agency (C!A), to conduct a Child Protective Assessment. The goal of this assessment is to answer the question, 'Are families better off because HHS is involved?' and conduct a business process redesign to ensure better outcomes in our CPS system.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (PHIG)**

To address challenges experienced during the pandemic, the CDC has awarded the State of Iowa with a grant focused on Strengthening US Public Health Infrastructure, Workforce and Data Systems. Goals include meeting critical infrastructure needs and developing expertise in the short term to address gaps, invest in state-driven public health systems development and in prevention.

## **HEALTH EQUITY ASSESSMENT**

Iowa HHS has prioritized reducing disparities to better serve all Iowans. As part of the State Alignment initiative, the Department of Human Rights has become a part of Iowa HHS. This presents an opportunity to better leverage resources and assess the way we serve underrepresented communities in Iowa, including refugee populations and people with disabilities. The key question we seek to address in this assessment is 'Do all Iowans have equitable access to the services they need?'

## **GOAL: SUPPORTING THRIVING COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES**

### **HOPE AND OPPORTUNITIES IN MANY ENVIRONMENTS (HOME)**

Iowa Medicaid currently supports seven Medicaid waivers; however, this approach fails to adequately support Iowans in the goal of living in the community of their choice. Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments will redesign Iowa's waiver and home and community-based services (HCBS) system to improve access to high-quality behavioral health, disability and aging services. To achieve this, Iowa HHS collaborated with partners at Mathematica and The Harkin Institute, conducting an evaluation of community-based services and publishing a final evaluation report in early 2023. The report provides recommendations on how Iowa can improve HCBS services and lays the groundwork for waiver redesign.

### **CERTIFIED COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINICS (CCBHC) PLANNING GRANT**

CCBHCs are a federally funded effort to expand and sustain community behavioral health care, ensuring timely access to high-quality, comprehensive, data-driven, evidence-based, coordinated, and integrated care for consumers and families. Participation enables Iowa to access enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAPs) for CCBHC services. CCBHCs have reduced waitlists for the 15 other states participating in the demonstration.

### **MULTISECTOR PLAN FOR AGING (MPA)**

The Multisector Plan for Aging is a cross-agency, actionable plan to transform the aging service delivery system over the next 10 years. An overwhelming majority of older Iowans want to age in current homes and communities, however, the infrastructure for in-home aging services isn't adequate. The MPA will look at how older Iowans will be able to maintain a great quality of life as they age in place.

### **FOSTERING ECONOMIC MOBILITY**

Iowa has a strong economy with low unemployment and a robust state budget. Our workforce is crucial to this success and must be healthy, prepared, and have a strong foundation to fully realize economic mobility in Iowa's marketplace. Financial, physical and emotional stability for individuals and families creates a foundation for making meaningful contributions to our community and economy. Iowa's Fostering Economic Mobility Project will analyze the barriers that exist within our economic, food and medical benefit structures and address barriers that lead to over- and repeat-reliance of public assistance.