

## **HHS and Division Updates for Aging & Disability Services and Behavioral Health Services**

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### **HHS Strategic Plan**

A new HHS Strategic Plan has been developed and will be publicly released soon. Details will follow, based on the following Guiding Principles:

- Mission Statement - Iowa HHS provides high quality programs and services that protect and improve the health and resiliency of individuals, families and communities.
- Data Driven – We make informed, data-driven, and evidence-based decisions to drive quality and improve results.
- Accountability – We use public resources responsibly to improve lives through the programs and services we provide.
- Integrity – We generate trust through honest, respectful, and reliable work that we can be proud of.
- Equity – We actively identify and remove barriers to access and inclusion so that we can provide all individuals an opportunity to succeed.
- Communication – We communicate in a thoughtful and coordinated way to ensure individuals are well informed about our work.
- Collaboration – We facilitate meaningful partnerships that focus on the voices of individuals and communities we serve.

Watch for the publication of the complete plan and updates at: [Strategic Planning | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

### **Medicaid HCBS 2023 Updates Related to Services**

New services added:

- Medical day care for children
- Enabling technology for remote support

Changes to service delivery:

- Added telehealth as a service delivery method when allowable
- Allowing parents and spouses to be paid caregivers for select services

- Allowing delivery of adult day care services in the member's home
- Added community businesses as a provider type for CDAC (Consumer Directed Attendant Care) on some waivers

Changes to eligibility:

- Removed the prohibition of children in foster care from being eligible for the Children's Mental Health Waiver

## **Proposed Changes to HCBS Waiver Services in 2024:**

- Streamline service definitions across waivers
- Streamline service limits across waivers
- Consolidate a few overlapping waiver services
- Remove the prohibition of paid caregivers receiving respite (for non-agency caregivers)
- Make improvements to self-directions to increase access and alleviate administrative burden

## **HOME – Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments**

This is the ongoing next step in the HHS collaboration with Mathematica and The Harkin Institute, building on their evaluation of community-based services in Iowa and their final report making recommendations on how Iowa can improve community-based services.

After considering the valuable input received through a series of Hometown Conversations, key areas identified for focus include:

- Provider capacity (rates, training, administrative burden, recruitment and retention strategies, rural workforce challenges)
- Individual Assessment (addressing inaccuracy and bias, frequency, assessment training)
- Systems Navigation (frustration with current communications and availability of information when needed, “one stop shop” for systems navigation)
- Case Management (case load ratios, turnover, workforce shortages, CM standards and training)
- Waitlists (getting services to people sooner, preliminary screening prior to being added to waitlist, prioritization)

- Other areas (unclear administrative rules, improving collaboration with schools, economic challenges and underemployment for caregivers, approach to racial equity)

### **Preliminary Waiver Redesign Discussion:**

- Moving from seven to two waivers – possibly one for adults and older adults and one for children
- Developing non-overlapping eligibility criteria
- Broad menu of services
- Iowa is currently starting to conduct a **Needs on Waitlist (NOW) Survey** to improve access to Community-Based Services (CBS) as part of the HOME project.
- Between January 2024 and Spring 2024, Iowa HHS will call people on waiver waitlists for home and community-based services (HCBS) to learn about their health conditions and support needs.
- There are currently about 15,000 people on waitlists across five different waiver programs and participation in the survey is critical to ensuring community-based services meet the needs of Iowans. Responses will be used to help improve the system and processes in the future.
- This survey is optional and waitlist status will not be impacted if waitlist members choose not to participate. We hope to get responses from as many people as possible to get accurate information about the supports people on waitlists need.

As a reminder, the HOME project aims to improve and ensure that everyone in Iowa has access to high-quality behavioral health, disability, and aging services in their communities

- The full evaluation report (Strengthening Iowa's Community-Based Services System) is available at: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/Iowa-CBSE-Final-Evaluation-Report.pdf>
- Based on those recommendations, an HHS team created a Transformation Plan to guide the next steps and implementation of the suggested improvements. It is available at: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/IA-CBS-Transformation-Plan-Compliant%20%286%29.pdf>

- The key recommendations are:
  1. Implement streamlined screening and improved processes to better align services with people’s needs.
  2. Take steps to align community-based services, including Medicaid HCBS waivers, to the needs of lowans.
  3. Maximize access to Medicaid HCBS and other community-based supports for people with long-term services and support (LTSS) needs.
- The HOME webpage also includes a “getting involved” link: [Get Involved with HOME | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- You can email the Mathematica-Harkin team at: [iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com)

## **Statewide LTSS Learning Management System**

On November 16, 2023, HHS posted a Notice of Intent to Award a contract for the development of a HCBS Learning Management System to Trualta, LLC, with a contract intended to begin January 1.

- The purpose of the project is to establish a Statewide Learning Management System (LMS) for Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) providers.
- The web-based Learning Management System (LMS) is intended for LTSS providers, direct support professionals and family caregivers to build capacity within the LTSS provider community and enhance and improve the delivery of LTSS.
- The goal of which is to support activities that lead to better health and performance outcomes for providers, direct support professionals and family caregivers.
- The software will provide a curriculum library as well as allow for Iowa specific content created by the Agency or providers to be uploaded to the solution.

## **System Alignment Assessment**

As discussed in previous updates, HHS has contracted with Health Management Associates (HMA) to study the delivery of health and human service programs in our state. The goals for of the assessment are:

- Create consistency in the way lowans access health and human services from county to county

- Harness the expertise and passion of our HHS workforce and local partners
- Make better use of funding
- Improve the way we work with local partners
- Better reflect the evolution of our state's resources and partners

The final report with recommendations from the study includes:

- Proposed options for service delivery and funding
- Identification of Iowa Code and Iowa Administrative Rules impacted by the recommendations that may need to be revised
- Next steps include:
  - Identifying things that will require legislative action
  - Defining the scope of what will be done, including:
    - Developing objectives across the lifespan
    - Determining outcomes to be achieved
    - Identifying methods for accountability
    - Determining what funding will look like to local contractors – what guardrails will be in place and how the flexibility to meet local needs can be achieved
    - Determining the right level and right type of staffing both at HHS and the local level

HHS will continue conversations with stakeholders and legislators to develop an implementation plan with a timeline for different phases and provide updates as this work progresses. You can find more information and future updates at:

[HHS System Alignment | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

You can access a complete (193 page) copy of HMA's Service Delivery Alignment Assessment Report or a three-page overview at: [download \(iowa.gov\)](#)

### **HHS ADA Coordinator**

Anne Crotty has been named the HHS ADA Coordinator. Role of the ADA Coordinator is to:

- Promote ADA compliance across HHS and its external partners
- Receive and process accommodation requests
- Develop and deliver trainings on disability inclusion
- Collaborate with partners to eliminate disparities that impact people with disabilities

- Participate in data management, quality improvement, and strategic planning initiatives
- Anne is currently working on:
  - Improving the accessibility of web and print communications
  - A health equity assessment
  - Developing and delivering HHS staff trainings
  - Building capacity among HHS staff on disability inclusion

## **New Aging and Disability Services Bureau Chief for Community Integration**

- Dawn Kekstadt has accepted the role of Bureau Chief for Community Integration in the Aging and Disability Services Division and began her new position on Friday, January 19.
- Dawn comes from Family Well Being and Protection within HHS.
- In her new role, Dawn will oversee Targeted Case Management (TCM) and will coordinate TCM's work with other HHS programs that allow older Iowans and Iowans with disabilities to live independently and fully integrate into their communities of choice.

## **Support in Times of Crisis**

In the aftermath of the tragic school shooting in Perry on January 4, just a reminder about the mental health and crisis services available to all Iowans:

- The [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) is a source of support available 24/7 to people in crisis, including people experiencing challenging reactions to disasters. Support is available in English or Spanish.
- Phone or text: 988 - Chat: <https://988lifeline.org/chat>
- [Recovery Iowa – Get Support Right Now. \(recovery-iowa.org\)](#)
- Iowa Resource Document: [HHS-DOE\\_Resources.pdf \(yourlifeiowa.org\)](#)

### **Free Virtual Training Psychological First Aid Training Available**

- A virtual training is available at no cost to participants on January 16<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm.
- Psychological First Aid is an evidence-informed modular approach to help everyone including first responders, public and behavioral health professionals, community members and families in the immediate aftermath of disaster, terrorism, and personal crisis.
- It is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster adaptive functioning and coping.
- During the training, you will receive practical suggestions about what you can say and do as you practice the principles of Psychological First Aid.
- Psychological First Aid (PFA) will help you to recognize and manage the basic symptoms of psychological distress. You will learn psychological first aid tools to bolster functioning during times of extreme stress.
- HHS administers Project Recovery Iowa, a group of people trained to assist communities in a multitude of ways. There is no cost to the training and there will be 4 CEUs along with a certificate of attendance.
- To register for the training please use this link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/psychological-first-aid-tickets-788620955507?aff=oddtcreator>

### **2024 Iowa Legislative Session Begins**

#### Legislative Calendar:

- The Iowa Legislative Session began on Monday – January 8.
- Governor’s Condition of the State Address – January 10
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court’s Condition of the Judiciary – January 19
- First Funnel – February 16 (bills must be voted out of a House or Senate Committee by this date to stay alive and remain eligible for debate – except for bills that spend money (appropriations bills), deal with taxes (Ways and Means bills), bills that come out of the Government Oversight Committee, or are sponsored by legislative leaders)

- Second Funnel – March 15 (bills must be voted out of one chamber and out of committee in the opposite chamber, except for bills that apply to tax, spending, Government Oversight, or leadership bills)
- Last Day of Session – April 16 (daily expense payments for legislators end at 100 days – the session may last longer, but after this date legislators travel and stay at their own expense and work without support staff)

For information on the legislative session, including weekly updates (posted beginning on January 16) see the DD Council’s infoNET website at: [infoNET \(iowaddcouncil.org\)](http://iowaddcouncil.org)

- DD Council’s 2023-2024 Guide to the Iowa Legislature is available at: [2023-2024 Legislative Guide.pdf \(cdn-website.com\)](http://cdn-website.com)
- DD Council’s Iowa Caucus Guide is available at: [Caucus Guide 2024-74250179.pdf \(cdn-website.com\)](http://cdn-website.com)

## Condition of the State Address

- Governor Reynolds Condition of the State Address on January 10 identified mental health and substance use as priorities for the Legislature this year, investing \$20 million of Iowa’s settlement award money from opioid-related lawsuits and streamlining the state’s administration of behavioral health.
- It also laid out an expansive agenda on education and health care for legislators, calling for substantial revisions to how special education is provided in schools and how mental health and substance use are treated across the state.
- If you want to watch the recording, you can access it on the Governor’s YouTube channel: [Governor Reynolds - YouTube](http://www.youtube.com)

## House Study Bill 542

- A bill modifying provisions related to the number of area education agencies in Iowa, the duties and powers of area education agencies, AEA boards of directors, the division of special education within the department of Education, the services provided by the area education agencies, AEA funding, and other matters relating to the Dept. of Education.



- Read the full bill at:  
[legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGI/90/attachments/HSB542.html](https://legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGI/90/attachments/HSB542.html)

## Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)

- The CCBHC Stakeholder Engagement Committee meetings continue to be held monthly, and they are public meetings
- The last meeting was on December 12 – no meeting dates for 2024 have been posted yet
- For more information (including the dates and locations for any upcoming meetings) go to: [Transforming Behavioral Healthcare in Iowa: CCBHC Planning Grant | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- You can also submit comments or questions by email to [IowaCCBHC@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:IowaCCBHC@dhs.state.ia.us)

## Iowa Medicaid Dashboard is available at:

<https://hhs.iowa.gov/lowa-Medicaid-dashboard>

## Iowa Medicaid Town Halls

- Iowa Medicaid monthly virtual town hall meetings continue
- The Medicaid staff want the provider and member town halls to be helpful and informative, so they are seeking input. Below is a link to an online survey to let them know what you would like them to focus on in 2024:  
<https://forms.office.com/g/l4hZsZkr7s>
- A separate town hall meeting is held for providers and members on the fourth Thursday of each month – the following dates have been posted:
  - **Thursday, February 1, 2024** - Member Town Hall | 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.
  - **Monday, February 19, 2024** - CCO Town Hall | 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.
  - **Thursday, February 15, 2024** - Provider Town Hall | 4 p.m. - 5 p.m.
  - **Thursday, February 15, 2024** - Member Town Hall | 5 p.m. - 6 p.m.
- Email specific questions to: [IMETownHall@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:IMETownHall@dhs.state.ia.us)
- Access more information and register at: [Iowa Medicaid Town Halls | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- Members who need assistance with registration, may contact Iowa Medicaid Member Services at 1-800-338-8366

**Iowa Medicaid Town Hall Archive**

To view recordings and materials from past town hall meetings and other public events such as listening sessions, go to: [Iowa Medicaid Virtual Meeting Archive | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)