

Council on Health and Human Services
Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2025

COUNCIL MEMBERS		EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS	
X	Chair Rebecca Peterson		Senator Sarah Trone Garriott
X	Andrew Allen		Senator Mike Klimesh
	Kay Fisk	X	Representative Heather Matson
X	Dr. Monika Jindal		Representative Carter F. Nordman
X	Dr. Donald Macfarlane		
X	Sandra McGrath		
X	Samantha Rozeboom, DNP		
X	Jack Willey		
X	Tom Brown		

1. Call to Order

Council Chair Rebecca Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

2. Roll Call

The secretary conducted roll call as indicated above; a quorum was present.

3. Public Comment

No public comment was received for the general HHS Council meeting. A written comment was received for the public hearing on the budget.

4. Approval of Minutes

Jack Willey moved to approve the May 29, 2025, minutes, seconded by Andrew Allen. Motion carried by voice vote.

5. Public Hearing on Budget (FY2027) – Jess Benson, Chief Financial Officer

HHS dashboards are available online for various programs that include enrollment, financial information, and other data.

- Highlights of Budget
 - FY26 total budget is approximately \$13.6 billion.
 - State funds: \$2.6 billion
 - Federal and other non-general funds: \$11 billion
 - Funds are distributed across HHS divisions. Medicaid has the largest allocation of approximately \$10.7 billion.
 - Jess summarized the general state funds for FY26.

- FY26 is the first year that the Behavioral Health Division is managing the mental health piece of the mental health and disability services system.
- The new Behavioral Health System is operated Iowa Primary Care Association, who is the Administrative Services Organization.
- Other Funds FY27 Estimate:
 - TANF Appropriations: \$158,980,383
 - TANF provides states with a flexible funding source to help needy families achieve self-sufficiency. The flexibility allows funding to be adapted to meet the unique needs of multiple programs.
 - A variety of funds support Medicaid.
 - Opioid settlement Fund FY27: \$28.6 million to support abatement of opioid crisis.
 - Medicaid received enhanced FMAP of 6.2% – HHS is currently operating on the carry forward dollars from FY25 to FY26, about \$90-\$100M. The carry forward will run out in FY27.
- HHS Director Kelly Garcia provided insights on the 2025 Federal Reconciliation Act; implications of eligibility changes; Medicaid work requirements (HHS is withdrawing its 1115 Waiver on work requirements and will follow federal law); payment error rates; and potential impacts to Iowa. Modernizing and investing in IT is key to reducing payment error rates, improving accuracy, streamlining processes, and providing better tools for eligibility workers and clients.

Council members discussed hospital-directed payments, using artificial intelligence tools, and provider support for assistance program applications.

As noted above, a written public comment was received from Iowa Behavioral Health Association about the budget (posted on HHS website with Council materials).

6. **Director's Update – HHS Director, Kelly Garcia**

- Rural Health Transformation: The State is submitting an application for the federal Rural Health Transformation program. The application will focus on several areas for improving rural health care outcomes. The funding would flow through the state to local communities and providers.
- Behavioral Health/Disability Service System: Launched in July 2025. The next phase is working to refine service needs.
- SNAP Healthy Foods Waiver: Beginning January 1, 2026, Iowa's SNAP healthy food waiver will align SNAP purchases with Iowa's non-taxable food list. Taxable items are not eligible for purchase with SNAP benefits. HHS is meeting with retailers to ensure smooth launch, including marketing, messaging, and training.

- Healthy Kids Iowa: Demonstration project that provided nutritious food options over the summer. Over 35,000 kids served in June; nearly 47,000 kids served in July. August numbers will be released. HHS is gathering feedback to see what went well and where there could be improvements.
- Medicaid Work Requirements: Iowa will comply with the new federal law that will go into effect January 2027. HHS is engaged in IT planning and consumer education.
- Iowa State Fair: Director Garcia and staff worked at the HHS booth at the Iowa State Fair and answered questions about HHS programs.
- New Medicaid Director: In September 2025, Lee Grossman will join Iowa HHS as the new Medicaid Director. The announcement was made in a press release. Additionally, a financial officer was hired to be embedded in the Medicaid program.

7. **Legal Overview on HHS Council Duties – Jancy Nielson, Legal Counsel**

Legal overview of Council duties included topics such as public access, notice requirements, open meetings, and open records.

A Zoom disruption led to a 30-minute recess for lunch; the meeting resumed on a new Zoom link which was posted on the HHS website.

Attorney Nielsen resumed her presentation. New legislation requires newly appointed officials to take training by the Iowa Public Information Board. Members who were appointed prior to July 1, 2025, may also take the training as a refresher even though it is not required.

8. **Weatherization Policy Advisory Council (Ad Hoc) – Christine Taylor, Program Manager; Jancy Nielson, Legal Counsel**

- Program Overview: The Weatherization Assistance Program is an energy efficiency program for low-income households and is administered by the U.S. Department of Energy. Federal funds are awarded to the state and are allocated to 15 local community action agencies and one local government (Polk County).
- Annual State Plan: Each year, prior to receiving funding, Iowa HHS submits a state plan to the U.S. Department of Energy, explaining how the funds will be administered. The draft plan is shared with stakeholders, posted for public comment, followed by a public hearing. Feedback is reviewed, and the plan is revised accordingly.

Federal law requires states to have a Policy Advisory Council (PAC) to approve the annual state plan prior to submitting to the U.S. Department of Energy. Attorney Nielson outlined the legal duties and membership of the PAC. The PAC was established as an ad hoc committee and operates under the Department; the

Department would like to move it under HHS Council.

- Dr. Jindal moved to form the ad hoc Weatherization Policy Advisory Committee under HHS Council; seconded by Jack Willey. Motion carried by voice vote, with Dr. McFarlane voting no.
- Andrew Allen moved to approve the recommended list of members to serve on the Weatherization Policy Advisory Committee; seconded by Tom Brown. Motion carried by voice vote, with Dr. McFarlane abstaining.
- Tom Brown moved to hold an additional HHS Council meeting approximately 7 weeks beforehand to review and approve the state plan before submission; seconded by Andrew Allen. Motion carried by voice vote, with Dr. McFarlane voting no.

The HHS Council requested that the Department share a list of ad hoc subcommittees and their meeting times for any Council members interested in attending.

9. **Legislative Implementation – Government Relations Team**

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) - Carrie Malone, Director of Policy and Government Relations

TANF is a block grant that supports low-income individuals. HHS asked the legislature for more flexibility and authority over how funds are spent. HHS has an internal structure on how to use these funds. Ideas on potential programs can be shared with HHS. There are three proposals to fund the following programs:

- Fatherhood and family building to increase family stability.
 - Emergency savings program, hopefully in partnership with employers.
 - Nonprofit accelerator.
- Opioid Settlement Funds - Nick Crawford, Legislative Liaison
 - Last session, the legislature appropriated dollars for the Opioid Settlement Fund. In the initial allocation, House File 1038 appropriated \$29 million from FY25 for various projects to combat the opioid crisis.
 - HHS dispersed \$26 million directly to various providers throughout the state. The recipients are listed on the HHS website.
 - An RFP will be issued for the remaining \$3 million for recovery housing proposals.
 - Future allocations: FY2026 through FY2030, the legislation directs an annual split of the settlement funds: 75% to Iowa HHS and 25% to the Iowa Attorney General's Office.
 - The legislation requires a structured approach with outcome indicators.

- Radon Test Kits – Sonya Streit, Legislative Liaison
 - Radon exposure can be detected through home radon testing kits. The Iowa legislature appropriated \$20,000 to HHS to distribute free radon test kits.
 - Iowa HHS partnered with the American Lung Association and distributed more than 1,000 test kits in less than two months.
 - More information on radon can be found on the HHS website.

10. **Administrative Rules - Victoria Daniels, Administrative Rules Coordinator**

- New rules for Behavioral Health System were developed.
- Aging Department rules were integrated under the HHS umbrella.
- Medicaid eligibility rules were simplified and updated to align with federal laws.
- Vital records and radiologic health rules are under review.

11. **State Medical Director's Update, Cancer Project – Dr. Robert Kruse, MD, MPH, FAAFP**

Senate File 647 includes an appropriation of \$1 million for the University of Iowa Cancer Assessment and Intervention Plan. The funding supports a collaborative project called "Cancer Drivers in Iowa," a statewide initiative between Iowa HHS and University of Iowa College of Public Health. The project's goal is to analyze the complex factors contributing to Iowa's high and rising cancer incidence to inform and guide Iowa HHS's response. This is a one-year project that began July 1, 2025.

Council discussed environmental factors, access to preventative strategies, behavioral factors, HPV vaccination rates (with immunization data on the HHS website), and collaboration with other agencies.

12. **Public Health Accreditation – Ellen Maahs, Strategic Development Coordinator**

Accreditation outlines the best practices that high performing public health agencies should be able to demonstrate. The accreditation framework is built off of ten essential public health services. The accreditation cycle is five years, and HHS was granted a one-year extension. HHS developed key documents through accreditation partnerships such as certain policies and strategic plans. HHS submitted 104 pieces of required documentation, completed site-visitor training, and developed an accreditation sustainability plan. A virtual site visit is planned. The HHS Director, Medical Director, and at least one HHS Council member will participate in the process.

13. **Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) – Emily Tokheim, BRFSS and Iowa Youth Survey Coordinator**

The CDC defines BRFSS as America's premier public health surveillance system,

giving states the data foundation needed for evidence-based health programs. HHS conducts an annual telephone survey, collects information on various health questions and behaviors. More than 8,000 adult Iowans participate annually. Data is sent to the CDC and is used to monitor trends and plan population health programming. BRFSS annual reports are on the HHS website. HHS is working with the Department of Education regarding outreach for the Iowa Youth Survey to increase participation.

14. **Council Discussion**

- Cannabis Ad Hoc Subcommittee
 - Met twice in July
 - Exploring repeal of Medical Cannabidiol Act, increase public awareness campaigns towards youth on dangers of cannabis use, and presenting report to the HHS Council.
 - The State Medical Cannabidiol Board is forming their own study committee. The Cannabis Ad Hoc Committee will reach out to see if there may be an overlap.
- Children's Behavioral Health Ad Hoc Subcommittee
 - Met on August 18, 2025
 - Monthly meetings planned
 - Exploring statewide efforts of other organizations
- Behavioral Health Assignments

The HHS Council reviewed their assignments as ex-officio members to the Behavioral Health Districts. Andrew Allen moved to approve the proposed assignments; seconded by Jack Willey. The motion carried by voice vote.

15. **Adjournment**

Tom Brown moved to adjourn; seconded by Andrew Allen. Motion carried by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 2:22 p.m.