



Early Childhood and Family Services System

Iowa's current Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) structure, along with early intervention and support activities, limit the state's ability to effectively coordinate among providers and maximize available state and federal funding. This lack of alignment reduces the quality and reach of services for children and families. Without a clear, statewide accountability framework, access to core services varies by county leading to gaps that weaken the overall impact of early childhood and family services programs.

To address these challenges, the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is proposing the development of an aligned Early Childhood and Family Services System that will ensure all Iowans receive consistent, high-quality services while making the most effective use of state and federal funding.

The Case for Early Childhood and Family Services Alignment

- **Lack of transparency and accountability** in the delivery of activities at the local level leading to inefficient and ineffective use of state and federal funding.
- **Funding inconsistencies** and **missed opportunities** to draw down additional federal funds.
- **Great variability** in early intervention and support activities **offered from local area to local area**, similar to what was experienced with mental health and disability services regions prior to the development of the Behavioral Health Service System.
- State and local boards' **inability to manage and provide oversight** of state general fund dollars and critical early childhood and early intervention programs.

Current State

Early Intervention and Support Programs

HHS Authority and Management

HHS has the authority to oversee and manage a variety of early childhood programs including but not limited to, Early Access and Iowa's Child Abuse and Prevention Program (ICAPP); a number of family home visiting programs; and several community services programs.

Board Authority and Management

Early Childhood Iowa (ECI)

- 1 state board
- 34 local ECI area boards

Decategorization (Decat) funding

- 40 local Decat boards

Community Partnerships for Protecting for Children (CPPC)

- 40 local Decat boards

Funding Current State

Total State Funding.....	\$41,133,790
Total Federal Funding.....	\$22,686,840

Total State and Federal Funding **\$63,820,630**

A New Early Childhood and Family Services System will:

- **Reduce administrative costs** and **maximize funding** by allowing HHS to send **\$3 million back to the state general fund and create an additional \$6 million in federal match revenue.**
- **Eliminate redundancies and inconsistencies.**
- **Ensure consistent oversight and management** of state and federally funded programs, and
- Allow HHS to **direct funding toward high-impact, evidence-based strategies** designed to improve outcomes for children and families.

Future State

Early Childhood and Family Services System

HHS Authority to Manage and Implement

Primary Prevention Activities - Proactive strategies, services, and supports designed to strengthen families, promote healthy child development, and prevent adverse outcomes before they occur.

Ongoing Family and Community Resources - A continuum of sustained, accessible, and family-centered resources that help families meet their needs, strengthen protective factors, and prevent child abuse and neglect.

Early Intervention Activities - Proactive supports designed to identify and address risk factors before maltreatment occurs including services to strengthen families, promote healthy development, and reduce the likelihood of abuse or neglect.

Funding Future State

Total State Funding.....	\$38,052,552
Total Federal Funding.....	\$28,479,502
Total State and Federal Funding.....	\$66,532,054

Proposed Legislative Changes

Modernize and Integrate Programs

- Early Childhood Iowa (ECI): Update Iowa Code to fully incorporate the Early Childhood Iowa initiative into the new Early Childhood and Family Services System.
- Iowa's Child Abuse Prevention Program (ICAPP): Update Iowa Code and associated rules to transfer all child abuse prevention funding and program oversight into the newly formed Early Childhood and Family Services System.
- Integrate additional early childhood services programs, family services programs, and community services programs into the newly formed Early Childhood and Family Services System.

Align Child Welfare and Prevention Strategies

- Update Iowa Code and associated rules to redirect Decategorization funding and oversight of funding to the Early Childhood and Family Services System.