



Updated FFY 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan Disaster Plan

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**Health and
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INTRODUCTION TO THE DEPARTMENT'S CHILD WELFARE DISASTER PLAN

The state of Iowa uses a Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG) plan. Due to the merger of the legacy Iowa Department of Public Health and legacy Department of Human Services, this plan has been updated to reflect this major merger. Details are currently being finalized to allow for new opportunities for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) side of our agency to utilize the Incident Command Structure that has previously been in place on the legacy Department of Public Health side of our agency.

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS or department) COOP and COG planning is a part of the state's government implementation plan that allows the HHS to maintain an ability to continue services for persons under its care who are displaced or adversely affected by a natural or man-made disaster. The availability of cell phones, email, and video conferencing at our fingertips plays an increasingly important role in instant communications. It is the intent of HHS to continue with the plan and its role in the statewide COG plan while assessing its applicability each year. An annual review of this plan will occur, with updates made as needed. Descriptions of the procedures and actions taken by the HHS Division of Family Wellbeing and Protection (referred to as Division or FWBP and working along with other HHS Divisions or state departments) in response to a crisis are in the COOP/COG Plan.

CHANGES TO PREVIOUS CHILD WELFARE PLANS

This plan for this year is not significantly different than recent years' updated versions. After a significant test of its application to a public health emergency, COVID-19, many important lessons were learned. As mentioned above, Iowa now benefits from a merger of two legacy Departments that can maximize each's expertise when it comes to Disaster Planning and responding to major emergencies. As this work all comes under one umbrella, the Disaster Plan is one area that will receive review and updates in the coming years.

Over the last year, many weather-related events affected Iowa, as is generally the case. Many Governor-declared disaster proclamations for multiple counties in the state occurred due to severe weather.

Yet, the operations of both the state offices (and its local affiliates) and its private contractors throughout Iowa were not affected to the extent of isolation from help or inability to operate. Entities experiencing predicaments successfully continued programs or used alternative methods of communication or temporarily relocated children or adults in care depending on what occurred and the need at the time.

Gov. Reynolds also authorized several disaster proclamations in multiple counties due to the USDA confirming a positive case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in commercial turkey flock.

This proclamation allowed state resources from Iowa Homeland Security, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and other agencies to assist with tracking and monitoring, rapid detection, containment, disposal, and disinfection. The proclamation also waived regulatory provisions related to commercial vehicles responding to affected sites.

Significant examples of weather-related disaster proclamation from the past year includes but is not limited to:

- June 21, 2024 - Governor Reynolds extended a disaster emergency proclamation to an additional 20 counties in northwest Iowa in response to severe storms and flooding that occurred on June 21, 2024. The 21 total counties included Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Floyd, Hancock, Humboldt, Kossuth, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Sioux, Webster, Winnebago, Woodbury, Worth, and Wright.
- July 4, 2024 – Governor Reynolds issued a disaster proclamation for Chickasaw and Wright Counties in response to severe storms and flash flooding that occurred on July 4, 2024.
- March 19, 2025 - Governor Kim Reynolds requested a Presidential Disaster Declaration for four Iowa counties due to significant severe weather conditions that occurred on March 19, 2025. Governor Reynolds requested funding under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance Program for Crawford, Harrison, Monona, and Woodbury counties for significant damage to public infrastructure and private property caused by the severe weather.
- April 17, 2025 - Governor Reynolds issued a disaster proclamation for Buena Vista, Fremont, Page, and Plymouth Counties in response to severe weather that occurred on April 17, 2025.

The governor's proclamation allows state resources to be utilized to respond to and recover from the effects of this severe weather and activates the Iowa Individual Assistance Grant Program and Disaster Case Advocacy Program.

- The Iowa Individual Assistance Grant Program provides grants of up to \$5,000 for households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Grants are available for home or car repairs, replacement of clothing or food, and temporary housing expenses.

The continuing emergence of new or improvements to existing technologies eased efforts required to respond to these occurrences. The availability of cell phones, email, and video conferencing at our fingertips plays an increasingly important role in instant communications.

It is the intent of the HHS to continue with the plan and its role in the statewide COG plan while continuing to assess its applicability each year. An annual review of this plan will occur, with updates occurring as needed.

THE HHS CHILD WELFARE DISASTER PLAN

This section includes child welfare planning information for the Iowa COOP/COG Plan and descriptions of supplemental procedures that relate to the federal requirements for disaster planning. These procedures describe how Iowa would:

- Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel displaced because of a disaster. The below table outlines several pieces that pertain to caseworkers including: Centralized Intake Line, HelpDesk communication, phone trees, etc. to get information out to our own internal HHS staff and others.
- Preserve essential program records; and
- Coordinate services and share information with other states. If HHS identifies a need to work with other states in the event of disaster response, an emergency assistance

compact agreement with other states would be put in place. This would allow HHS to utilize resources from other states for the purpose of disaster response.

Operationally, the COOP/COG Plan focuses on the following: emergency authority in accordance with applicable law; safekeeping of vital resources, facilities and records; and establishment of emergency operating capacity. It also follows executive and legal directives under Iowa law. Additionally, the Division developed supplemental procedures related to communications with local, state, and federal entities.

Iowa Code, Chapter 29C.5 and 29C.8 both require comprehensive evacuation planning. In addition, the Iowa Severe Weather and Emergency Evacuation Policy, adopted December 2001, states: "It is the Governor's philosophy that there must be plans to ensure that State Government can operate under exceptional circumstances. Therefore, Executive branch departments must deploy plans to ensure staffing and provisions of essential services to the public during severe weather or emergency closings."

The Foster Care and Protection of Adults and Children sections of the COOP/COG Plan concentrate on individuals and families who receive services provided by HHS and provide guidelines for foster care providers to develop emergency procedures responsive to accidents or illness, fire, medical and water emergencies, natural disasters, acts of terror and other life-threatening situations for children in out-of-home care. Since state fiscal year (SFY) 2012, contracts for foster group care/QRTP and child welfare emergency services/youth shelter have required contractors to collaborate with HHS and implement written plans for disasters and emergency situations, including training plans for staff and volunteers. These contractor plans focus on: situations involving intruders or intoxicated persons; evacuations; fire; tornado, flood, blizzard, or other weather incidents; power failures; bomb threats; chemical spills; earthquakes; events involving nuclear materials; or other natural or man-made disasters. Contracted providers created and implemented written plans for the COVID-19 disaster in early 2020.

DISASTER COMMUNICATIONS WITH FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

(HHS) PARTNERS

If a natural or man-made disaster in Iowa affects the clients of HHS or inhibits the ability of HHS to provide services, the following communication steps shall be followed.

- The Director of the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or the Director's designee(s), the Division Director of Family Well-Being and Protection, the Director of Child Protective Services or the Bureau Chief of Child Welfare and Community Services shall call Kendall Darling, Region VII Program Manager in the DHHS Regional Office, at his office (816) 426-2262 or other at the cell phone number (202) 868-9753, at the earliest possible opportunity.
- If there is no response from the Regional Office, the Director or designee shall call Joe Bock, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, at (202) 205-8618.
- The content of the call shall be a summary of the situation and a request for any assistance that may be necessary or appropriate.

DISASTER COMMUNICATIONS WITH OTHER STATE AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Division of Family Well-Being and Protection is committed to ensuring the safety and continuity of services for children and families during emergencies. In the event of a disaster, the Division will activate its Disaster Plan to identify and locate children under state care who are displaced, ensure ongoing service availability, respond to new child welfare cases,

maintain communication with displaced caseworkers, preserve essential records, and coordinate with other states. This plan aligns with federal requirements under Section 422(b)(16) of the Social Security Act by addressing these key areas.

To activate the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) for resource support, the Division will follow this procedure via the Bureau of Emergency Management in the Public Health Division:

1. The Division Director notifies the Bureau of Emergency Management of resource needs.
2. The Bureau submits an EMAC request to the State Emergency Operations Center.
3. The Center coordinates with EMAC's National Coordinating Team to deploy resources.

This process ensures rapid, accessible service delivery, meeting federal mandates for coordination, communication, and record preservation while prioritizing community engagement.

THE INFORMATION BELOW IS REFERRED TO IN THE COOP/COG PLAN AND THE FOLLOWING TABLE:

- Kelly Garcia, Director, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, (515) 281-5452
- Sarah Ekstrand, Public Information Officer, (515) 401-7988
- Lori Frick, Child Protective Services Director, (563) 326-8794
- Jeff Van Engelenhoven, Chief of the Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology, (515) 721-0401
- The Division Policy Team:
 - Kristin Konchalski, Bureau Chief Child Welfare and Community Services, (515) 377-0328
 - Jason Geyer, Field Operations Manager, (515) 362-7443
- Central Abuse Hotline, (800) 362-2178

STATE PROCEDURES RELATED TO IDENTIFIED FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The actions reported in the following table are from Iowa's COOP/COG Plan or are supplemental to the plan, and they identify the personnel, equipment, vital records and databases, and facility and infrastructure needed for each action. These actions encompass the four federal requirements identified at the beginning of this section.

TABLE I: STATE PROCEDURES

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
Foster Care						
1 Communicate with foster care providers regarding status and assistance needs and any initial instructions; Determine if there is an initial need to relocate clients through the Deputy Director.	Division/ Bureau Policy Team	Foster Care Database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	HHS field staff, Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare services contractors, Dept. of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing	Employees manual, foster care licensing information
2 Determine potential relocation sites (other institutions or foster care homes) to use if needed and help with placement and transportation logistics if needed.	Division Policy Team/ Institution/foster care providers (HHS Field Office responsibility)	Foster Care Database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	HHS field staff, Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare services contractors, Dept. of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing	Employees manual, foster care licensing information

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
3 Contact IT to transfer the Central Abuse Hotline to the alternate location	Field Operations Manager	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
4 Support staff and providers by making policy clarification available through the Central Abuse Hotline Help Desk.	Bureau Policy Team	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
5 Coordinate responses to staffing needs for abuse allegations identified through the Central Abuse Hotline; Coordinate with the Division of Field Operations for response. Respond to abuse allegations; assign local staff to respond to local site	Administrator of the Division of Field Operations, IT Manager	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
6 Coordinate staffing and assign as necessary to back-up inoperable service areas to respond to foster care providers' needs.	IT Liaison, Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services, Field Operations Manager	Foster Care Database	Mainframe	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	Division of FWBP	Employees manual
7 Ensure care provider payment system continues by contacting IT and transferring system to alternate location (ensure client/server JARVIS database and mainframe FACS application are operational); Implement paper back-up payment system if necessary.	Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster Care Database, FACS and/or JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	Division of Data Management	Employees manual

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
8 Provide staffing to back-up inoperable service areas to respond to foster care providers' needs.	Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster care database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	HHS field staff, Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare services contractors	Employees manual
Protection of Children and Adults						
1 Determine status of group homes or institutions in affected area; Assess the affected area and determine the nearest institution that's able to accept persons if needed.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster care database		Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
2 Coordinate with CWIS team and ICN to ensure the Abuse Hotline Phone Number is transferred to alternate location site; Provide staffing to receive abuse allegations. Forward reports to the specific area where abuse may have occurred. If no local phone lines, phone assessment will be completed by policy division.	Field Operations Manager and Director of Family Wellbeing and Protection	JARVIS database		Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
3 Contact CWIS team to ensure foster care payroll system continues to issue monthly payment checks to care providers; if not available, implement paper issuance system using the most recent database backup.	Division or Bureau Policy Team, Chief Information Officer	Foster care database/ Mainframe, payroll list, JARVIS database	Mainframe	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
4 Organize and provide emergency responders to respond to providers requesting assistance or policy clarification.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services and Field Operations Offices	Foster care database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
5 Ensure access to the Central Abuse Registry and MIS systems are available (JARVIS); Determine need to modify current policies regarding child abuse allegation response times.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services and Division of Field Operations, Chief Information Officer	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline, Servers, Mainframe	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
6 Provide staffing to respond to abuse allegations; Assess the availability of field staff to conduct abuse assessments and make staff re-assignments as needed.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services and Division of Field Operations	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/ Vital Records Needed
7 Assist new placement of children and provide transportation if required	Division or Bureau Policy Teams/ Division of Field Operations	Foster Care database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual