

Iowa REACH

Communications Subcommittee

January - March 2026



Health and
Human Services

Audience Mapping

Intended Audience

Primary Populations

- Children and youth with serious emotional disturbances (SED)
- Caregivers and families (biological, foster, adoptive, kinship)

Service Providers & Support Systems

- Behavioral health and residential providers (PMICs, QRTPs, shelters, detention centers)
- Healthcare and hospital social workers
- School counselors, social workers, and resource navigators
- Daycares and early childhood providers
- Foster care and adoption networks

Intended Audience (p.2)

Justice & Public Systems

- Juvenile justice system (judges, court officers, court services)
- Legislators
- Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)
- Other HHS divisions and state agencies (behavioral health, child welfare, education, justice)

Associations & Advocacy Organizations

- Provider and professional associations
- Advocacy and family support organizations
- Youth-led and youth advisory councils
- Disability and civil rights organizations

Audience Values

- **Early identification and prevention** to reduce crisis-driven care.
- **Community-based support** for children and youth with SED, helping them receive services in their home communities.
- **Improved training and education** for providers and caregivers, strengthening quality and consistency of care.
- **Simpler, more navigable systems** so families can find and use resources more easily.

Barriers

- **Historical mistrust of government** and service systems among families and communities.
- **Fear of surveillance or escalation**, including deeper child welfare or juvenile justice involvement.
- **Youth voices** not being believed, centered, or acted upon.
- **Power imbalances** between providers and families that limit shared decision-making.
- **Stigma** surrounding behavioral health needs and services.

Messages

Children, Youth, and Caregivers

- *You are the experts in your own lives. Your experiences, priorities, and voices matter.*
- **Services should support your goals—not define them.** Care should align with what you and your family want to achieve.
- **Support should be accessible** without unnecessary system escalation. Getting help should not automatically mean deeper involvement with child welfare or justice systems.
- **The right level of support** should be available at the right time and in the right place. Early, appropriate services help prevent crises.

Children, Youth, and Caregivers (p.2)

- **Care should be family-directed, youth-directed, and community-based.** Families lead goal-setting, and outcomes improve when they do.
- **Keeping children and youth in their home and communities matters.** In-home and community-based services help avoid institutional or more restrictive placements.
- **Early intervention prevents higher-level, more restrictive care.** Acting sooner supports stability and well-being.

Legislators and Policymakers

- These services are a part of litigation.
- Coordinated, community-based services **reduce long-term costs and system involvement**. Prevention and early intervention lower reliance on higher-cost systems.
- **Policy alignment and sustainable funding are essential**. Long-term success depends on consistent investment, workforce support, and cross-system coordination.

Community Leaders

- **You are a critical link** in early identification and prevention. Communities help families recognize needs early and know where to turn for support.
- **It takes a village.** Strong outcomes for children and youth depend on coordinated efforts across families, schools, faith groups, and community organizations.
- **Behavioral health support is part of overall community well-being.** Healthy communities support the mental and emotional health of children, youth, and families.

Messengers

Internal Leadership & Governance

- HHS executive and division leadership
- Cross-division partners and subject-matter leaders
- Subcommittee members and advisory participants

Early Adopters and Providers

- **Early adopter providers** who can pilot approaches, model best practices, and share lessons learned.
- **Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)** as key system partners supporting alignment, access, and sustainability.
- **Local county and town advocates** who influence community awareness, trust, and local implementation.

Lived Experience & Peer Messengers

- Youth with lived experience
- Caregiver and parent champions
- Parent partners and peer supports
- Youth Justice Council and other youth advisory bodies

Trusted Community Voices

- Established community partners and local leaders
- Organizations and individuals with strong connections to vulnerable populations and systems