

Council on Health and Human Services

Meeting Minutes

May 28, 2026

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

1. **Call to Order**

Chairperson, 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. **Approval of Minutes**

Kay Fisk moved to approve minutes from the February 27, 2026, HHS Council meeting, seconded by Tom Brown. Motion carried by voice vote.

4. **Public Comment**

No public comments were received.

5. **Newborn Screening Panel Presentation**

Kimberly Noble Piper Director, Center for Congenital and Inherited Conditions, presented the Ad Hoc Committee for Management of the Newborn Screening Panel's recommendation to add Metachromatic Leukodystrophy (MLD) to Iowa's newborn screening panel. She outlined the condition's severity, its estimated incidence, and the critical need for early diagnosis and treatment before symptoms begin. She discussed treatment options—including supportive care, stem cell transplant limitations, and emerging gene therapy—and emphasized that screening allows identification before irreversible neuromuscular decline begins. She highlighted the committee's evidence-based review process,

Tom Brown moved to add MLD to Iowa's newborn screening Panel; Jack Willey seconded the motion. Motion carried by voice vote.

6. **State Plan for Brain Injury (2026-2029)**

On behalf of the Ad Hoc Iowa Advisory Committee on Brain Injuries, Maggie Ferguson, Disability & Injury Prevention Project Director, presented the 2026–2029 State Plan for Brain Injury and requested formal approval from the Iowa HHS Council.

Brain injury affects thousands of Iowans annually, with more than 11,000 traumatic brain injury related hospital visits or deaths and over 600,000 adults reporting a lifetime head injury. The proposed statewide plan was developed through listening sessions, surveys, and committee planning, focusing on two major areas: service delivery and prevention/education. It aims to improve access to care, strengthen prevention efforts, and enhance quality of life for individuals impacted by brain injury. Upon approval, the Committee will proceed with implementation and evaluation planning, report progress annually, and maintain ongoing community engagement.

Progress will be reported to the HHS Council at least annually.

Jack Willey moved to approve the 2026–2029 State Plan for Brain Injury; Andrew Allen seconded the motion. Motion carried by voice vote.

7. **Director's Update**

Principal Deputy Director Larry Johnson provided the following highlights:

- Iowa HHS participated in several high-level engagements, including a roundtable with Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Governor Reynolds, and state legislators about statewide cancer initiatives, Healthy Hometowns, and modernization efforts.
- During Public Service Week, Governor Reynolds visited Iowa HHS and presented recognition awards to multiple staff,
- Provided updates on cancer hub and spoke planning, transparency improvements on the HHS webpage, Vision Project's progress ahead of schedule, hiring efforts to fill department vacancies, opioid settlement fund awards, and progress of behavioral health redesign.

8. **Medicaid Update**

Director Lee Grossman is the new Iowa Medicaid Director. He reported that Iowa Medicaid is prioritizing Program Integrity, Operational Strength, and Long-term Sustainability by enhancing provider screening and re-enrollment, improving data-driven fraud detection, increasing coordination with managed care organizations, reducing administrative burden, and protecting taxpayer dollars. Modernization

efforts include upgraded IT systems, stronger provider and stakeholder coordination, and continued progress on the HOME initiative to expand community-based behavioral health, disability, and aging services. Rising costs—driven by behavioral health, long-term supports, and prescription drugs—are prompting targeted cost containment strategies to maintain access while staying within budget. A major upcoming initiative, the Pharmacy Carve-Out, will shift pharmacy benefits to fee-for-service to help control costs without impacting provider rates or member access, pending federal approval.

9. **Administrative Rules Update**

Victoria Daniels, Administrative Rules Coordinator, provided an overview of rulemakings published since the last Council meeting, including those related to the Child Advocacy Board, Opioid Settlement Funds disbursement, kinship foster care standards, and other updates.

10. **Aging and Disability Services Update**

Zach Rhein, Aging & Disability Services Division Director, reported key updates across major programs, highlighting broad service reach through Area Agencies on Aging nutrition and assistance programs, continued statewide engagement through Iowa Solutions for Aging with Independence and Longevity (IA SAIL) to address aging challenges, and progress in Community Integration with the release of the Iowa Olmstead Plan prioritizing access to care, housing, economic stability, and mental health. Additional updates included Targeted Case Management for fee-for-service members, growth in Disability Access Points, strengthened collaboration with Centers for Independent Living, expanded supports from the Office of Public Guardian, and significant protective efforts addressing Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Abuse. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman continues to safeguard rights for residents in facilities, with top concerns centered on care, autonomy/rights, and financial issues.

11. **Legislative Update**

Carrie Malone, Director of Policy and Budget Strategy; Nick Crawford, Legislative Director; Sonya Streit, Legislative Liaison

During the legislative session, the HHS Government Relations team actively monitored proposed legislation to determine its impact on the agency, with several key priorities ultimately passed, including codifying the Child Care Assistance Pilot, refocusing food assistance on nutrition, and directing tobacco tax revenue to pediatric cancer research. An HHS prefile bill establishing the Early Childhood and Family Services System advanced through collaborative work with the Early Childhood Iowa association, creating HHS-led districts, ECFS Advisory Councils, and an interim study committee, while preserving the current ECI structure. Another HHS prefile bill aligned agency services by formally establishing HHS districts, requiring collaboration with Area Agencies on Aging, and placing the Volunteer Services Unit under HHS authority.

12. **Medical Director's Update**

Dr. Robert. Kruse, State Medical Director and Division Director of Public Health, presented updates on recent Health Alert Network (HAN) messages, emphasizing their role in rapidly communicating emerging health threats and supporting coordinated preparedness. He highlighted Iowa's readiness efforts for the 2026 Ebola outbreak and the Andes virus hantavirus situation, noting that public risk remains low while the focus is on early recognition, travel monitoring, partner coordination, and reinforcing healthcare readiness. He also summarized the HAN on rising stimulant-related overdose deaths, especially methamphetamine, underscoring the need for clinical awareness, improved surveillance, and continued connection to public health and treatment resources. He outlined the CDC advisory on medetomidine appearing in the illegal fentanyl supply, stressing the importance of EMS and clinical awareness due to prolonged sedation and complex overdose presentations, and the need for vigilant reporting, supportive care, and ongoing system-wide preparedness.

13. **Council Discussion**

Council discussed potential topics for future meetings.

14. **Adjournment**

Jack Willey moved to adjourn; seconded by Dr. Monika Jindal. Motion carried by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 1:41 p.m.