

2021 Annual Report



iowacollaboration
for**youth**development

State of Iowa
February 2021

February 1, 2021

Dear Governor Reynolds and Members of the General Assembly:

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council respectfully submits its Annual Report, as required by Iowa Code Section 216A.140.

The ICYD Council is committed to providing the Legislature and Governor with information, data, and recommendations to improve the lives and futures of Iowa's youth by continuing to:

- coordinate youth policy and programs across state agencies;
- increase the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of opportunities and services for youth;
- support, adopt, and apply positive youth development practices at the state and local level.

The 2021 Annual Report spans an exceedingly interesting year that has demonstrated the value of collaboration to enhance efficiencies during crisis. The report also includes how we continued our focus on the primary issue and goal – *Increasing Iowa's Graduation Rate to 95% by 2020*. The 2020 graduation rate will be released in the coming months and we will see how close we came to achieving that goal.

This year, the ICYD Council will also discuss the need to modify the goal or shift to another priority. Areas that have been discussed and may be prioritized are – racial justice, the effects of COVID-19, and the educational achievement gap for underrepresented students. The ICYD Council agencies addresses these issues as individual agencies and work together as a team by making the best use of existing resources to maximize efficiency in state government in order to create substantial and lasting positive changes for Iowa's youth. In addition, learning new ways to work smarter became commonplace.

The ICYD Council continues to leverage grant funding and in-kind staff support to implement many of the recommended actions without increased funding. However, as the state continues to invest in Iowa's youth, ICYD will continue to prioritize actions where that investment may be directed to maximize positive outcomes. These include sustaining the use of the Iowa Youth Survey every two years, formalizing training and coaching of youth and expanding authentic youth engagement opportunities in state and local governments, along with funding for youth to participate in more state-level initiatives. In addition, as pilot projects are completed (currently funded with grants), there will be a need to incorporate effective programs into current agency structures that facilitate expansion to other areas in the state.

We look forward to working with the Governor's Office and the Legislature to increase the graduation rate and promote positive youth development. The ICYD Council will continue to keep you informed of the progress made toward that goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,



San Wong

Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Council

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<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/criminal-juvenile-justice-planning/councils/iowa-collaboration-youth-development>

Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Council Members
February 2021

San Wong, Director, Department of Human Rights
Steve Michael, ICYD Chair, Administrator, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice
Planning, Department of Human Rights
Janee Harvey, Department of Human Services
Julie Hibben, Bureau of Substance Abuse, Department of Public Health
Will Keck, State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC)
Ann Lebo, Director, Department of Education
Adam Lounsbury, Executive Director, Commission on Volunteer Service
Gary Niles, Chief Juvenile Court Officer, 3rd Judicial District
Steffani Simbric, Administrator, Child Advocacy Board
Beth Townsend, Director, Iowa Workforce Development
Shanell Wagler, Facilitator, Early Childhood Iowa
Dale Woolery, Director, Office of Drug Control Policy
Vacant, State 4-H/K-12 Youth Development Program Leader

Acknowledgments

The ICYD Council thanks all of the staff who contributed to producing this report. A special acknowledgment is extended to Kevin Drahos, Will Keck, Volta Adovor, and Abby King, the youth representing the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) and the Iowa Youth Congress (IYC), who provided unique perspectives and important contributions by sharing their thoughts, ideas, expertise, and youth voice. In addition, we want to thank Reeva Neighbors, Claire Yocum, Kylie Spies, Tiara Mosley, and Brianne Messer, the AmeriCorps members whose tireless dedication provided guidance and assistance to the SIYAC and IYC members during 2020.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – ICYD COUNCIL 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council members are leaders of 12 state entities with the vision that **“All Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood.”** The ICYD Council oversees the activities of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) and has sought input from these youth leaders in the development of more effective policies, practices, programs, and this Annual Report. SIYAC consists of youth between 14 to 21 years of age who reside in Iowa, with the purpose to foster communication with the governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families and to advocate on important issues affecting youth. In 2009, legislation passed formalizing the ICYD Council and SIYAC in Iowa Code §216A.140.

The ICYD Council has prioritized the following youth issue: **By 2020, Iowa will increase the graduation rate from 89% to 95%.** Iowa’s high school graduating class of 2019 four-year cohort graduation rate was 91.6%. Even with this achievement, several issues remain (e.g. substance abuse, family, employment, teen pregnancy, and mental health) that may prevent youth from graduating from high school. ICYD Council members work to address these issues through their individual agencies and together as a team to maximize efficiency in state government and make the best use of existing resources. The five-year fixed cohort graduation rate in 2018 was 93.5%.

The ICYD Council has several emerging activities and recommendations in 2021:

- Adopt the recommendations from the Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.
- Develop new strategies to incorporate authentic youth engagement (AYE) and positive youth development principles into state-level policy and practice, which will require staff training and engaging youth to serve on state boards and commissions, and create additional ways to involve youth.
- Support state-level youth opportunities and youth-led initiatives (e.g. State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, Achieving Maximum Potential, Iowa Youth Congress, Youth Action Squads).
- Implement strategies to eliminate the educational achievement gap for underrepresented students in pilot communities by utilizing innovative strategies and incorporate federal initiatives, such as Every Student Succeeds Act and Family First Prevention Services Act.
- Continue to develop ways to share information among agencies to address issues affecting youth who receive services and supports from multiple agencies.
- Continue efforts through the statewide implementation of the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol and Decision Matrix. The overall goal of these related projects is to reduce recidivism of juvenile offenders by ensuring that the right services are provided to the right youth at the right time.
- Expand and enhance the Juvenile Reentry System (JReS) to reduce the recidivism rates for youth returning from placement in the Boys’ State Training School (STS) and other residential facilities.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE ICYD COUNCIL AND THE STATE OF IOWA YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SIYAC)

This is the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council's annual report to the Governor and General Assembly. The report provides information on the:

- Purpose, goals, 2020 accomplishments, and emerging activities for 2021;
- Membership of the ICYD Council and the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC);
- Progress on achieving the priority youth goal– ***Increasing Iowa's graduation rate to 95% by 2020***, with data and information on progress; and
- Recommendations for action in 2020 to the Governor and General Assembly.

In 2009, legislation passed placing the ICYD Council and SIYAC in Iowa Code §216A.140. Prior to becoming "codified councils", both ICYD and SIYAC operated as non-statutory entities. The ICYD began in 1999 as an informal network of state agencies from 10 departments serving as a forum to foster improvement and coordination of state and local youth policy and programs.

The ICYD Council's vision is:

"All Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood."

The ICYD Council meets quarterly to receive reports from state agencies and SIYAC, review progress of current activities, review data, and establish priorities and recommended actions on many issues affecting youth. The prioritized goal – ***Increasing Iowa's Graduation Rate to 95% by 2020*** – was selected due to its summative measure of youth development efforts, and the many cross-agency issues that contribute to youth graduating from high school. Each agency on the ICYD Council has a role in achieving this goal.

ICYD has historically participated in a variety of state and national youth initiatives and has been recognized nationally (e.g. National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, federal Interagency Working Group for Youth Programs, Forum for Youth Investment, and Children's Cabinet Network) for its work in coordinating youth development efforts. The ICYD Council provides a venue to enhance information and data sharing, develop strategies across state agencies, and present prioritized recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly that will improve the lives and futures of Iowa youth.

The Department of Human Rights is the lead agency and oversees activities for the ICYD Council.

ICYD Council's Purpose

The ICYD Council strives to improve the lives and futures of Iowa's youth by:

- Adopting and applying positive youth development principles and practices at the state and local levels;
- Increasing the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of opportunities and services and other supports for youth;
- Improving and coordinating youth policy and programs across state agencies.

ICYD Council's Membership

The ICYD Council's membership includes the director or chief administrator (or their designee) of 11 state entities and the SIYAC. The ICYD Council has the ability to expand membership to include others that will assist the Council in achieving its purpose. In addition to each agency's director (or designee) serving on the ICYD Council, many of the agencies have additional staff that actively participate in meetings and complete tasks as directed by the ICYD Council on the ICYD Results Team. Below are the agencies and members of the ICYD Council:

ICYD Council Members – February 2021

Department of Human Rights San Wong, Director Steve Michael, Division Administrator Chair of ICYD Council	Early Childhood Iowa Shanell Wagler, Facilitator
Child Advocacy Board Steffani Simbric, Administrator	Iowa Workforce Development Beth Townsend, Director *Wendy Greenman, WIOA Program Coordinator
Commission on Volunteer Service Adam Lounsbury, Executive Director *Mary Sheka, Economic Development Specialist	ISU Extension and Outreach, 4-H Youth Development Vacant, State 4-H/K-12 Youth Development Program Leader
Department of Education Ann Lebo, Director *Jay Pennington, Public Service Manager	Judicial Branch Gary Niles, Chief Juvenile Court Officer 3 rd Judicial District
Department of Human Services Janee Harvey, Administrator - Division of Adult, Children, and Family Services *Doug Wolfe, Program Planner	Office of Drug Control Policy Dale Woolery, Director
Department of Public Health Julie Hibben, Bureau of Substance Abuse	State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) Will Keck, Chair Tiara Mosley, SIYAC Coordinator

*Agency Designee when member is unable to participate

II. BLUEPRINT TO ACHIEVE AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth engagement is a powerful way for community-based organizations and government agencies to involve the young people they serve to improve the system. The young people provide opportunities to make challenging actions to create positive social change. Youth engagement offers the expertise and partnership of young people, helping adults fully understand what it is like to grow up in a rapidly changing world while navigating the various systems and policies impacting the lives of youth each day.

Youth provide a valuable and unique perspective to address issues due to the “way they think” (brain development) and they are closer to the problems and know more about the issues – their lived expertise. The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council would like to enhance the efforts to authentically engage youth.

Youth engagement is most successful when it is authentic and supported by youth-adult partnerships. The question is, what makes the engagement “authentic”? Throughout the decades, agencies, organizations, and boards have struggled to authentically engage and create decision-making positions for young people. The failure so often begins when adults and youth are inadequately prepared to work together as equal partners as a result of pre-existing attitudes of both adults and young people.

Authentic youth engagement is achieved when young people experience the following:

- Are respected for their ideas and opinions and are free to state them;
- Are working in an environment that facilitates their engagement, and they are involved in a meaningful way as teachers as well as students;
- Are equal partnership in all aspects of their own individual planning and decision-making;
- Are equal partners in making decisions and determining the direction of programs and activities, including the creation of the agency’s policy, the program or service itself, the training curriculum, and delivery of the program or services;
- Expect to, and receive, consistent opportunities to set goals, devise strategies, and act;
- Participate in challenging experiences, with the necessary support to help them succeed; and
- Thrive when adults listen to them, respect them, and engage them in meaningful programs and activities.¹

It takes time for adults and youth to fully embrace and create a culture and environment that will foster authentic youth engagement. This time of norming allows adults and youth to feel comfortable with one another, to agree on areas of importance, and to come to decisions that are agreed on by both partners. While the idea is simple and the process laborious, the benefits of ensuring authentic youth voice and participation are invaluable for all.

The ICYD Council is embarking on new strategies to incorporate authentic youth engagement (AYE) into state-level policy and practice. The new approach has started with the development of the Youth Action Squads (YAS), one focusing on racial justice

¹ <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/Youth%20Voice.pdf>

and the other on COVID-19 effects. The groups of 25 youth (14-24 years of age) are receiving structured training, coaching, and education that is providing them with the skills and opportunities to successfully create and implement an action plan and advocate on local, state, and national issues.

The ICYD Council is developing next step opportunities for current YAS members. This "opportunity pathway" has many options and will evolve. All of the opportunities listed on the pathway will continue to enhance their skills. Listed below are a number of opportunities for youth (some currently available, others being developed, and others are planning to be developed).

State-level YAS >>>>>>>>>>>>Create and Lead Local YAS in their community >>
Local YAS members recruited for State-level YAS >>>>Iowa Youth Congress >>
State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) >>ICYD Youth Coordinating Council
>> Local and state-level advisory boards >>>>>>>> State YAS facilitator
>>>>>Trainer for state agencies on Positive Youth Development / Authentic Youth
Engagement >> >>> Internships with state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and
private sector entities >>> Legislative positions – House/Senate Page, Clerk for
legislator >>>>>> AmeriCorps positions throughout state government >>> state
employee >>>> elected positions – local school board, city council, state legislator
>>>> Leader and Decision-maker.

In order for these opportunities to be available and successful, state agency decision makers must receive training and technical assistance on positive youth development (PYD) and AYE.

Long-term goals:

- State agencies have a commitment for authentic youth engagement that includes partnering with youth to create and deliver improved services and resources.
- Youth are participating in authentic state agency decision making.

What it will take to make it happen:

- ICYD to lead the PYD and AYE implementation and coordinate the trainings of youth and state agency staff, and be the clearinghouse for information and resources.
- State agencies commit to the need for authentic youth voice in policy making and decisions on services.
- Identify additional opportunities for youth
- Ensure youth have access to become engaged with government agencies.
- Involve youth in continuous quality improvement (CQI) process to improve services.
- Intentionally recruit diverse youth to participate in trainings.
- Identify and highlight current youth engagement activities in state agencies.
- Local service agencies and community entities are encouraged to implement PYD and AYE approaches.

Currently, the ICYD Council oversees the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) and the Department of Human Rights oversees the Iowa Youth Congress (IYC). The next section describes the purpose and priorities of these youth initiatives.

There are multiple state- and local-level youth initiatives providing leadership opportunities for youth. The multiple initiatives need to be better aligned and coordinated to attract more youth to participate and to specifically seek more diverse youth. Many of these initiatives target underrepresented youth. All of them promote opportunities for youth to engage state and local leaders, discuss issues affecting youth, and develop leadership skills.

The ICYD Council and Department of Human Rights (DHR) is leading the coordination effort of the multiple agencies and organizations that support state-level youth-fueled councils and initiatives. The goal is to effectively remove barriers for historically underrepresented youth by empowering them to realize their leadership capabilities and by challenging adults to recognize and engage youth. The effort will equip youth with the tools to communicate their vision, inspire collaboration, and make significant contributions that result in positive change.

The next section describes the purpose and priorities of two state-level youth initiatives, overseen by the ICYD Council and the Department of Human Rights.

STATE OF IOWA YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SIYAC) – PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

The purpose of SIYAC, as stated in Iowa Code §216A.140(8), is to “foster communication among a group of engaged youth and the Governor, the General Assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families; and to advocate for youth on important issues affecting youth.” SIYAC’s mission statement is: “To raise awareness of issues that affect young Iowans by providing civic opportunity and to inspire youth to create a better future for Iowa.”

Originally established in 2001, SIYAC was formalized in Iowa Code in 2009 as an avenue for youth to inform state leaders and local communities on issues important to young people. SIYAC consists of 21 youth aged 14 to 20 who reside in Iowa. Members serve two-year staggered terms that begin in July, and members meet quarterly to identify issues affecting youth, discuss community needs, form partnerships to meet those needs, draft positions on youth issues, communicate those positions with legislators, and plan and conduct service activities. In addition, SIYAC members participate in ICYD Council meetings. The ICYD Council oversees the activities of SIYAC and seeks input from these youth leaders in the development of more effective state-wide policies, practices, and programs. In addition, SIYAC presents independent information and recommendations on youth issues to the Iowa General Assembly and Governor during the legislative session. SIYAC members also carry out two service projects, one in their respective communities and one state wide.

Notable SIYAC accomplishments during 2020:

- SIYAC’s service project focused on providing winter essentials for youth in need. The project collected 60 coats, 50 pairs of socks, 50 pairs of gloves and 25 hats and were donated to a local youth shelter.

- A legislative issue supported by SIYAC passed the 2020 Legislature to enhance accessibility of rural broadband, which is high capacity transmission techniques that provides internet and communication services. The following SIYAC members received notable recognition for their individual achievements over the past year:
- Will Keck, SIYAC Chair, was a United States Senate Youth Program Finalist.
- Alex Drahos, SIYAC Vice Chair, was named the International President of Key Club.
- Tyler Loudon was the recipient of the State 4-H Communication Award as well as exhibited the Reserve National Champion Full blood Maine Anjou Heifer at the 2020 Fort Worth Stock Show.
- Lily Glenn made and distributed 300 mental health kits to her community. Lily also served as the local 4H Club treasurer.
- Blythe Kelly received the President's Gold Volunteer Service Award for completing 250 hours of community service in one year.

In September 2020, SIYAC identified focus areas and developed four committees: Education, Health, Environment, and Human Rights. SIYAC has prioritized the following diverse issues to advocate for during the 2021 legislative session:

Education Committee:

- Education Equity: Establish equity-focused professional development for licensed K-12 educators in the State of Iowa, and incorporate representative, historically accurate, and diverse perspectives into the K-12 Curriculum Standards

Health Committee:

- Gender Equity: Advance gender equity in the state to improve the health and safety of all Iowa youth. Gender Equity includes LGBTQ+ rights, women and menstrual equity, and intersex rights.

Human-Rights Committee:

- Sanctuary Cities: Reestablish sanctuary cities in the State of Iowa to allow immigrant youth the opportunity to grow up without fear of deportation.
- Automatic Voter Registration: Establish an electronic, automatic voter registration system in the State of Iowa to make it easier for youth to vote in all elections and create a more secure voting and electronic system

Environmental Committee:

- Sustainability Education: Implement environmental and sustainability curriculum inside our primary education systems to promote youth awareness of the environment and sustainability efforts.

In partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR), SIYAC will participate in the department's Day on the Hill on February 25, 2021, to meet with legislators and community leaders to advocate for their youth-focused position statements.

2020-2021 SIYAC Members:

Name	Office Held	City	County
Achinteya Jayaram		Bettendorf	Scott
Alex Drahos	<i>Vice Chair</i>	Cedar Rapids	Linn
Ava Moorlach	<i>Human Rights Committee Chair</i>	Indianola	Warren
Blythe Kelly	<i>Public-Relations Chair</i>	Urbandale	Dallas
Isabel Hanson	<i>Environmental-Committee Chair</i>	Norwalk	Warren
James Piazza		Des Moines	Polk
Kanyon Huntington		Afton	Union
Kendall Jones		Ottumwa	Wapello
Klaertje Hesselink		Cedar Falls	Black Hawk
Koro Castillo		Cedar Falls	Black Hawk
Kunal Chugh	<i>Legislative Affairs Chair</i>	Dubuque	Dubuque
Lily Glenn	<i>Health Committee Chair</i>	Ottumwa	Wapello
Lulu Roarick		Iowa City	Johnson
Paras Bassuk	<i>Education Committee Chair</i>	Iowa City	Johnson
Sam Wilson		Carlisle	Warren
Soomin Koh	<i>Service Chair</i>	Iowa City	Johnson
Stacia Drey		Cedar Rapids	Linn
Tyler Loudon		Creston	Union
Vidya Iyer	<i>Secretary</i>	West Des Moines	Polk
Will Keck	<i>Executive Chair</i>	Indianola	Warren

IOWA YOUTH CONGRESS (IYC) – PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

The purpose of Iowa Youth Congress (IYC) is to enhance opportunity and broader representation of all Iowans in the government process. IYC also provides students the knowledge, abilities, and direction to advocate and enact change in their communities and at the state level for issues affecting youth.

Through the IYC experience, students attain a variety of skills including:

- public speaking
- problem-solving
- political debate in multicultural leadership settings
- advocacy
- developing a deeper understanding and application of democratic decision making, government, and public engagement

Established in 2006, IYC was created to provide youth of all backgrounds the opportunity to gain hands-on education in the subject areas of state government, democracy, advocacy, and civic engagement. Iowa Youth Congress consists of up to 100 high-school-aged youth who reside in Iowa. Members begin their term in July and meet quarterly to identify issues affecting youth, discuss community needs, form partnerships to meet those needs, draft positions on youth issues, communicate those positions with legislators, and plan and conduct service activities. IYC presents information and recommendations on youth issues in the form of position statements to the Iowa General Assembly during the legislative session. IYC members each carry out individual service projects and 30 hours of volunteering. Additionally, IYC members attend and participate in ICYD Council meetings.

Notable Iowa Youth Congress accomplishments during 2020:

- Two of the 2019-2020 position statements were introduced as bills in the Legislature.
- Initiated an opportunity for youth to job shadow with legislators.
- IYC successfully transitioned to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following IYC members received notable recognition for their individual achievements over the past year:

- IYC member Orlando Fuentes was awarded the Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Porter S. Dimery Sr. Youth Human Rights Award in March of 2020.
- IYC member Noah Hackbart was a National Council on Youth Leadership Nominee and State Finalist.

IYC members received training during an orientation and organized as regional teams, which met and discussed potential issue areas to prepare for the 2020-2021 IYC Mock Congress. Regional priority issues were chosen and researched. Position statements were created based on the research.

In October, IYC's annual Mock Congress was held and emulated the House of Representatives. During this time, each position statement (or "bill") was introduced, debated, and voted on. Those that received a majority vote became legislative priorities. At this event, Senator Zach Whiting discussed the legislative process and responded to questions.

IYC selected 5 issue areas for the 2020-2021 year and developed four committees: Education, Elections, Environmental, and Human Rights. IYC has prioritized the following diverse issues to advocate for during the 2021 legislative session:

Education Committee:

- Diverse Education: The Iowa Board of Education should pass legislation regarding the implementation of a more culturally diverse curriculum in grades 3rd through 8th, implementing content that covers diverse cultures and history.
- Comprehensive Sex Education: The Iowa State Legislature should support proposed amendments to Iowa Law 279.50 Human Growth and Development Instruction to integrate an inclusive and comprehensive sex education curriculum. The curriculum should tackle the essential topics of LGBTQ+ inclusion and contraceptives.

Elections Committee:

- Congressional Districting: The Congressional District System should be adopted and would provide a more proportional way to delegate electoral votes in the United States Presidential election. It would ensure that each district is represented while still awarding two electoral votes for the statewide winner.

Environmental Committee:

- Plastic Bag Tax: This legislation would enforce a five-cent tax on single-use plastic bags to stymie environmental degradation and leverage all revenue - projected \$44.5 million within ten years of its enactment - to support Iowa's education and environmental conservation efforts.

Human-Rights Committee:

- Banning the Gay Panic Defense: The "gay panic defense" should be eliminated as a justifiable legal practice as it directly contradicts Iowa hate crime law (729A.2) which defines a hate crime as a violation of rights "when committed against a person or a person's property because of the person's... sex, sexual orientation".

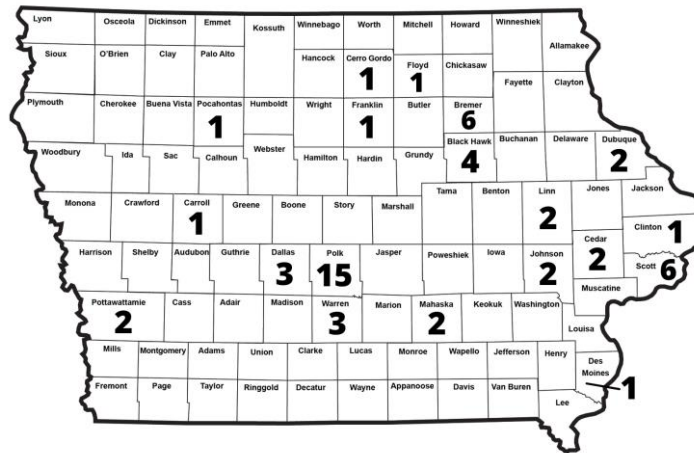
In November, IYC held a skill-building call. During this call, members were able to talk to subject matter experts related to their position statement and ask questions to these experts. Speakers included:

- Kendall Antle, Iowa Secretary of State
- Angelisa Beldin and Alica Vasto, Iowa Environmental Council
- Damian Thompson, Iowa Safe Schools
- Peetra Lange and Chris Noth, volunteers for Des Moines Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)

In partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR), IYC will participate in the department's Day on the Hill on February 25, 2021 to meet with legislators and community leaders in order to advocate for their youth-focused position statements.

2020-2021 IYC Members:

Iowa Youth Congress currently has 56 youth from around Iowa. They represent 19 different counties, 30 cities, and 33 different high schools.



III. PRIORITIZED ISSUE: INCREASING IOWA'S GRADUATION RATE

Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the reasons that we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools.
 -Jim Collins in *Good to Great* (2001)

The ICYD Council has prioritized two of the Youth Development Result Areas:

- All Iowa youth are successful in school.
- All youth are prepared for a productive adulthood.

Graduation and dropout rates are included as performance measures for both of these result areas in the first annual report dated February 1, 2010. At that time, the ICYD Council agreed that the focal point for collaborative youth development efforts should address a specific and aggressive goal for the state, which is: By 2020, Iowa will increase the high school graduation rate from 89% to 95%.

It is with the understanding that several issues (e.g. substance abuse, family, employment, teen pregnancy, and mental health) prevent many youth from graduating from high school. The ICYD Council work to address these issues as individual agencies and together as a team to maximize efficiency in state government, make the best use of existing resources, and create substantial and lasting positive changes for Iowa's youth.

Performance measures to assist in showing all youth are on the path to graduate are:

1. The number of students at each high school grade level who are on the trajectory to graduate on time.
2. The gaps for graduation and dropout rates for subpopulations (i.e. race, ethnicity, second language learners, low socioeconomic, and students with disabilities).

In March 2020, the Department of Education released the 2019 high school graduation data. Data show 91.6 percent of students in Iowa's Class of 2019 graduated within four years, up from 91.4 percent in the Class of 2018. Since 2011, Iowa's four-year graduation rate has increased 3.3 percentage points overall, with significant gains in nearly every student demographic subgroup.²

"More Iowans are graduating high school better equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century economy," said Gov. Reynolds. "Whether it's through computer science, STEM or work-based learning, we are changing the way our students learn and removing barriers that exist for underserved communities. Today's announcement is an important milestone, but our work continues to guarantee student success well beyond high school."³

Iowa's five-year graduation rate – which reflects students who were part of a graduating class but took an extra year to finish high school – was 93.5 percent for the Class of 2018, up from 93.3 percent for the Class of 2017.⁴

Iowa's annual dropout rate reflects the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who drop out of school during a single year. The annual dropout rate dipped to 2.61 percent for the 2018-19 school year from 2.67 percent for the previous school year.⁵

Graduation and Dropout Data

Iowa graduation rates are calculated with a formula established by the U.S. Department of Education. Unique student identification numbers allow school districts to account for all ninth-grade students as they move through high school. At the state level, the method helps determine when a student graduates, even if the student has switched districts in Iowa during high school. See Appendix 1 for the graduation rate calculation methodology.

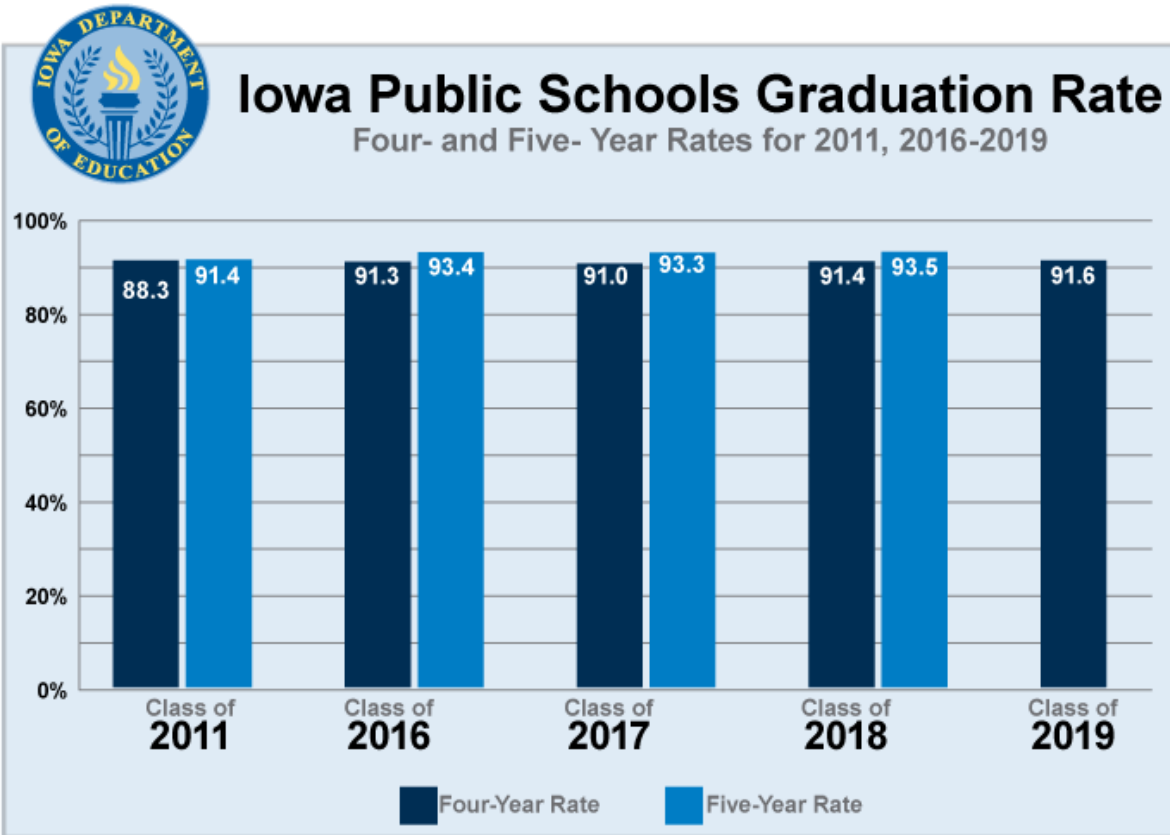
² <https://www.educateiowa.gov/article/2020/03/03/iowa-s-high-school-graduation-rate-reaches-record-high-916-percent>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.


Table 1



<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

- Iowa's graduation rate increased 3.3% between 2011 and 2019.
- The five-year graduation rate for 2019 is not available.

Table 2



Four-Year Graduation Rate by Student Subgroup						
	Class of 2011	Class of 2016	Class of 2017	Class of 2018	Class of 2019	Comparison 2011-19
All	88.3%	91.3%	91.0%	91.4%	91.6%	3.3%
Individualized Education Program	69.9%	69.5%	74.2%	76.5%	76.1%	6.2%
Low Socioeconomic Status	78.1%	83.9%	83.7%	84.4%	85.2%	7.1%
English Learners	70.0%	80.8%	80.3%	79.3%	78.8%	8.8%
African American	73.2%	79.7%	82.3%	81.3%	81.6%	8.4%
American Indian	79.2%	80.6%	83.3%	75.6%	77.3%	-1.9%
Asian	88.5%	91.5%	92.5%	92.5%	92.3%	3.8%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	81.6%	88.1%	77.5%	75.3%	77.0%	-4.6%
Hispanic	75.2%	84.5%	82.4%	83.9%	84.5%	9.3%
Multi-racial	82.0%	83.9%	85.2%	87.7%	88.3%	6.3%
White	90.2%	92.9%	92.7%	93.2%	93.3%	3.1%


Individualized Education Program: Students who participate in special education programs
 English Learners: Students whose native language is not English and participate in an English Learners program
 Low Socio-economic Status: Students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals
 Multi-Racial: Non-Hispanic students identified as more than one race

<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

Table 2 shows the four-year fixed graduation rates for the Classes of 2011 through 2019 graduating classes.

- Among the ethnic/race subgroups, White students had the highest graduation rates at 93.3%.
- Since 2011
 - Hispanic students have climbed by 9.3%,
 - Students whose first language is not English have increased by 8.8%
 - African American students have gone up 8.4%
 - Hawaiian/Pacific Islander have decreased by 6.3%, and has the lowest graduation rate in 2019 at 75.3%.
- Overall, Iowa's graduation rate increased 3.1% between 2011 and 2019.

Table 3



Five-Year Graduation Rate by Student Subgroup

	Class of 2011	Class of 2016	Class of 2017	Class of 2018
All	91.4%	93.4%	93.3%	93.5%
Individualized Education Program	80.7%	80.1%	82.3%	83.1%
Low Socioeconomic Status	83.6%	87.6%	87.7%	87.9%
English Learners	80.1%	86.8%	86.4%	85.5%
African American	79.3%	84.7%	86.2%	85.2%
American Indian	82.5%	85.1%	85.8%	79.8%
Asian	92.0%	95.0%	94.9%	96.1%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	86.8%	90.5%	84.5%	80.0%
Hispanic	82.3%	88.8%	87.3%	87.8%
Multi-racial	86.1%	87.4%	88.6%	91.0%
White	92.8%	94.6%	94.6%	94.9%


Individualized Education Program: Students who participate in special education programs
English Learners: Students whose native language is not English and participate in an English Learners program
Low Socio-economic Status: Students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals
Multi-Racial: Non-Hispanic students identified as more than one race

<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

The five-year fixed cohort graduation rates for the graduating class of 2011 through 2018 are displayed in Table 3. The overall graduation rate in 2018 is 93.3%.

- The Asian subgroup had the highest graduation rate at 94.9%, followed by the White subgroup at 94.6%.
- Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) had the lowest graduation rate – 82.3%, among the subgroups.

Table 4



Grades 9-12 Dropout Rate by Student Subgroup

	2010-11	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18
All	3.4%	2.8%	2.8%	2.7%	2.6%
Individualized Education Program	5.2%	4.9%	4.9%	4.0%	4.4%
Low Socioeconomic Status	5.9%	5.6%	5.7%	5.1%	5.1%
English Learners	7.2%	6.7%	6.6%	6.4%	6.6%
African American	8.6%	6.7%	7.2%	6.6%	6.5%
American Indian	9.2%	6.4%	7.7%	6.7%	6.8%
Asian	2.5%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.5%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5.5%	2.9%	5.7%	4.8%	8.1%
Hispanic	6.4%	5.2%	5.0%	4.8%	4.9%
Multi-racial	4.6%	4.3%	5.0%	4.2%	3.9%
White	2.8%	2.2%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%

Individualized Education Program: Students who participate in special education programs
English Learners: Students whose native language is not English and participate in an English Learners program
Low Socio-economic Status: Students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals
Multi-Racial: Non-Hispanic students identified as more than one race

<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

Table 4 shows Iowa’s annual dropout rate, which reflects the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who drop out of school during a single year.

- The annual dropout rate dipped to 2.61 percent for the 2018-19 school year from 2.67 percent for the previous school year.
- Asian students had the lowest dropout rate of 1.5%.
- Hawaiian/Pacific Islander subgroup had the highest dropout rate of 8.1%.

IV. ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2020 AND EMERGING ACTIVITIES IN 202

The ICYD Council has listed recommendations in the following categories:

- Focus on underperforming schools and communities.
- Assess current state initiatives and maximize existing resources.
- Investigate research-based approaches and effective strategies.
- Coordinate across systems to identify and support vulnerable students.
- Engage additional stakeholders.

Based on the graduation and dropout data, the ICYD Council recognizes that minority youth, migrant youth, youth in poverty, and youth with disabilities are in need of additional and specific supports and services. Engaging these youth and removing barriers so these students are able to stay in school and graduate from high school will be required to reach the goal of a 95% graduation rate. Below are ICYD Council accomplishments and emerging ongoing activities that address the broad recommended actions.

Focus on Underperforming Schools and Communities

➤ Eliminate Educational Achievement Gap

In Iowa, 91.6% of students graduate from high school in four years, but many subpopulations (e.g. minority students, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty) are not currently achieving that level (see Table 1 – page 13). Each of the subpopulations under 90% has specific needs, cultural elements, and demographic considerations. In addition, many students are represented in multiple subgroups. Students in poverty, crime and minority status are at a higher risk and the cumulative effect of these factors substantially impacts school performance for youth and many do not graduate from high school.

The state and its communities need to establish methods to identify students with these multiple risk factors and provide high-quality and effective supports and services to the respective students and their families.

The U.S. Department of Education approved Iowa's plan for school accountability and support under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Iowa's plan reflects a commitment to ensuring every student graduates ready for success in college and in the workplace. The foundational principles listed below served to guide the development of Iowa's ESSA Plan.

The Iowa Department of Education continues to be committed to:

1. Implementing an Inclusive Process. We will implement an inclusive process that balances various internal and external stakeholder inputs, reinforces priority outcomes, and demonstrates value for our partnerships with these stakeholders.

2. **Prioritizing Frequent Communication.** We will communicate frequently with internal staff members, the field (including parents and the public) and state leadership.

3. **Supporting Iowa's Context.** We will proceed with the development of Iowa's ESSA Plan while federal regulations are developed. We will ensure our plan supports any federal regulations developed while staying true to Iowa's specific needs and context.

4. **Maintaining the Intent and Spirit of ESSA.** We will assert that Iowa's interpretation of ESSA is what guides the development of our ESSA State Plan.

5. **Maximizing District Flexibility.** We will work to maximize flexibility for Iowa's school districts.

6. **Ensuring Equity for Historically Disadvantaged Students.** We will emphasize equity in results across all subgroups identified in ESSA: students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, students from diverse ethnic and racial groups, English learners, students of military connected families, as well as students who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care.

Iowa's plan builds on bold education improvement efforts underway that align with ESSA requirements, including clear and rigorous standards for what students should know and be able to do, a school accountability system that steers support where and when schools need it most, and a structure for professional learning that emphasizes teacher leadership and evidence-based practices. The plan also features unique measures of student engagement, safety and learning environment, as well as postsecondary readiness.

A portion of Iowa's ESSA plan include reports, Iowa School Performance Profiles, on each school on a set of accountability measures. The reports display scores based on a school's overall performance, as well as the performance of subgroups of students, such as children from low-income backgrounds.

The accountability measures include a unique indicator of school climate based on student surveys of engagement, safety and overall learning environment called Conditions for Learning. The other measures are: Student participation on state assessments, academic achievement, student academic growth, graduation rate, progress in achieving English language proficiency, and postsecondary readiness.

The new reports specify schools that have been identified for additional support and improvement based on their performance. ESSA requires these identifications to ensure students have the same opportunities for success that exist for students in other schools.

Identified schools receive support from the state and area education agencies and will develop improvement plans with input from local stakeholders. Schools also will have an opportunity to put resources toward a cohesive improvement effort.

Assess Current State Initiatives and Maximize Existing Resources

➤ Juvenile Justice System Improvement (Formerly SMART)

In October 2019, the Juvenile Justice System Improvement action plan was finalized that assists the Judicial Branch in developing standardized policies and practices to enhance the quality of services and supports provided by Juvenile Court Services.

The anticipated outcomes of this project are to develop strategies to standardize policies and practices and ensure the quality and effectiveness of services for youth in the juvenile justice system. Anticipated results when implemented are reduced recidivism, improved outcomes for youth, increased public safety, and reduced disproportionate minority contact.

The Judicial Branch and additional stakeholders are implementing strategies to improve the identified priority areas:

- Governance - State Court Administration hired a new Director of Juvenile Court Services and support staff. The Director of Juvenile Court Services will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the recommendations from each of the priority areas, including:
 - Oversee and coordinate the development of formal uniform statewide policies and procedures for juvenile court services.
 - Administer the Graduated Sanction and Court-Ordered Services funds (community-based services for youth in the juvenile court system).
 - Develop a quality assurance process for community-based services and group care, which includes SPEP assessments.
- Detention Screening – The automated Detention Screening Tool (DST) has been modified to score correctly, and a statewide policy has been developed to ensure standardized usage of the DST, in addition to a training model and certification process to use the tool.
- Iowa Delinquency Assessment (IDA) – The IDA will be updated following the re-validation recommendations, a statewide policy will also be developed and approved to ensure standardized usage, and a training and continuous quality improvement process will be implemented.
- Racial and Ethnic Disparities / Diversion
 - Expand the use of diversion programs and develop a statewide policy for juvenile diversion services.
 - Collect and analyze juvenile diversion data.
 - Implement effective trainings for juvenile court staff to reduce racial bias.

- Deep-End Girls – Create specific group care facilities for girls, based on risk and criminogenic need. Adopt all recommendations from the Iowa Girls Justice Initiative (IGJI) strategic plan. The Iowa Task Force for Young Women will continue to strategize ways to implement the recommendations.
- Extension of Jurisdiction – Study outcome data and research other states' successful strategies to extend jurisdiction of juvenile court supervision. Explore and develop a plan for extending juvenile court jurisdiction beyond age 18 years of age.

➤ **Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™)**

The goals of the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™) are to reduce recidivism of juvenile offenders, increase public safety, and eliminate costs for services that do not work. Additional long-term positive effects are improved family and peer relations, alleviated mental health symptoms, and consistent school attendance by ensuring that ***the right youth receive the right service at the right time.***

The Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP) in the Department of Human Rights has coordinated the activities.

The SPEP™ diagnostic tool assesses the likely effectiveness of services in terms of recidivism reduction by examining four domains:

- Service Type
- Amount of Service
- Quality of Service
- Risk Level of Youth

Service providers receive a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) at initial and subsequent scorings with recommendations related to recidivism reduction. Services are intended to be rescored to assess performance no more frequently than 18-month intervals. This allows for sufficient time to make programmatic changes, the results of which would then be reflected within future cohorts of youth receiving the service.

It has always been the intention to expand usage of the SPEP™ tool into all judicial districts and a two-part plan to broaden the usage of SPEP™ emerged.

- 1) CJJP has made participation in the SPEP™ process a requirement for any services receiving federal funding that passes through CJJP and is distributed to the judicial districts. This creates the potential for the SPEP™ to be present in all eight judicial districts, but on a smaller scale. CJJP will also target residential settings identified as either being prepared for or having a need for evaluation of their services and will continue to revisit services that have already been evaluated for ongoing re-evaluation.

- 2) The creation of a statewide service inventory with the assistance of Juvenile Court Services will allow all community-based services to be “SPEP™ ready” at all times. A similar inventory will be created for residential services as well, using information directly from providers and compiled and maintained by CJJP. Juvenile Court Services in the eight Judicial Districts and CJJP is in the process of finalizing the necessary information for the database and has also created a web application to facilitate access to the programmatic information about various services. This web application will allow users to search for services in a number of different ways (e.g. location, service type, provider name, population served, etc.)

System officials will be able to utilize aggregate and individual results from the service inventory to make more informed decisions about resources and services for justice-involved youth. They will also be better equipped to formalize statewide evidence-based practices and improve the overall functioning of the juvenile justice system. Additionally, organizations which provide these services will have access to a research-based tool and evaluation results which they can use to improve the services available to youth in terms of recidivism reduction.

A decision matrix has been developed with the purpose to act as a structure for juvenile court decision making, weighing youth risk to reoffend (including offense severity) as well as other relevant variables in order to assist system officials with determining the most appropriate level of supervision and type of services for youth, thereby reducing recidivism and improving outcomes.

The decision matrix is currently being piloted in Polk County and Johnson County Juvenile Courts. An advisory team continues to oversee the development and implementation of the matrix.

Investigate Research-Based Approaches and Effective Strategies

➤ Adolescent Brain Research and Implications for Youth Programs

The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth (2019) report from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine has found that changes in brain structure and connectivity that happen during adolescence (10-25 years of age) provide young people with unique opportunities for positive, life-shaping development, and for recovery from past adversity. The report has recommendations for multiple systems (education, health care, child welfare, and justice) to capitalize on the opportunities and for addressing inequities.

Economic, social, and structural disadvantage along with racism, bias, and discrimination shape life-course trajectories during adolescence, by reducing opportunities and supports that are available for other youth, and increasing risks that other youth do not experience.

Investments in programs and interventions that capitalize on the brain's capacity to change during adolescence can promote shifts in young people's life trajectories, for youth who may have and are facing adverse experiences.⁶

“Recommendations for the education system:

- *Rectify disparities in resources for least-advantaged schools and students.*
- *Design purposeful but flexible pathways through education.*
- *Teach practical knowledge and nonacademic skills, such as decision making, adaptability, and psychosocial skills.*
- *Protect the overall health and well-being of each student.*
- *Foster culturally sensitive learning environments.*
- *Help adolescents and families navigate the education sector.*

Recommendations for the health system:

- *Strengthen the financing of health care services for adolescents, including insurance coverage for uninsured and under-insured populations.*
- *Improve access to comprehensive, integrated, coordinated health services for adolescents.*
- *Increase access to behavioral health care and treatment services.*
- *Increase the number of adolescent health care providers and improve their training and distribution.*
- *Improve federal and state data collection on adolescent health and well-being, and conduct adolescent-specific health services research and disseminate the findings.*

Recommendations for the child welfare system:

- *Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in child welfare system involvement.*
- *Promote broad uptake by the states of federal programs that promote resilience and positive outcomes for adolescents involved in the child welfare system.*
- *Provide services to adolescents and their families in the child welfare system that are developmentally informed at the individual, program, and system levels.*
- *Conduct research that reflects the full range of adolescents in the child welfare system.*
- *Foster greater collaboration among the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and health systems.*

⁶ Medicine., National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and, Richard J. Bonnie, and Emily P. Backes. *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth*. Washington, District of Columbia: The National Academies Press, 2019.

- *Provide developmentally appropriate services for adolescents in the child welfare system.*
- *Foster greater collaboration among the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and health systems.*
- *Provide developmentally appropriate services for adolescents who engage in noncriminal misconduct without justice system involvement.*

Recommendations for the justice system:

- *Reduce disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability status, and sexual orientation or gender identity and expression among adolescents involved in the justice system.*
- *Ensure that youth maintain supportive relationships while involved in the justice system and receive appropriate guidance and counsel from legal professionals and caregivers.*
- *Implement policies that aim to reduce harm to justice-involved youth in accordance with knowledge from developmental science.*
- *Implement developmentally appropriate and fair policies and practices for adolescents involved in the criminal justice system.*
- *For those youth in the custody of the justice system, ensure that policies and practices are implemented to prioritize the health and educational needs of adolescents and avoid causing harm.”⁷*

The ICYD Council will study systemic policies and practices that disproportionately have negative impact on minority youth, and work together to implement strategies to support the *Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth* recommendations.

Coordinate Across Systems to Identify and Support Vulnerable Students

➤ Statewide Comprehensive Juvenile Reentry Systems (JRES)

The ICYD Council has been the oversight body for the Juvenile Reentry System (JReS) initiative. A JReS Task Force consists of multiple state agency partners and other stakeholders, which is assisting with institutionalization and/or development of policy, procedure, and structural elements of JReS. The goal of JReS is to reduce recidivism rates and to improve other youth outcomes through implementation of comprehensive system-wide reforms to juvenile reentry policies and processes which include: enhanced cross-system coordination, utilization of quality and effective programming, and prioritization of resources.

During 2021, this effort expanded to additional residential placement settings, and is developing specific strategies to enhance family engagement, and expand supportive services for youth returning home.

⁷ Ibid.

Major JReS components include:

- Policy—Development of a standardized structure for practices, case planning, and policy related to placement and reentry for juvenile offenders. The standardized policy includes utilization of risk and needs assessments, collaboration
- Family Engagement – Enhance family engagement strategies during placement and during reentry transition.
- Community Support – Expand supportive services and oversight for youth transitioning from group care.
- Assessment—Standardization and policy related to the utilization of the Iowa Delinquency Assessment (IDA) and other assessment tools.
- Collaboration—Broader engagement and participation by various stakeholders in reentry planning for permanency and transition (e.g. youth, families/extended family, juvenile justice system officials, school staff, private youth-serving agencies, Iowa Workforce Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, Iowa Aftercare Services Network, faith communities, advocacy/mentor groups).
- Youth Transition Decision Making Teams—Introduction of Youth Transition Decision Making team meetings (YTDMs) for youth returning from STS and other select group care settings. YTDMs are professionally facilitated and youth-led. YTDMs facilitate discussions between formal and informal support networks to help youth develop a personalized plan that may include arrangements for housing, continuing education, workforce entry/training, medication and/or counseling, or address other issues such as leisure activities prior to their return home from placement. The transition effort includes follow up with youth after their exit from out-of-home placement.
- Evidence-Based Programs—Engagement of youth in the aforementioned evidence-based programs upon release from placement. This may also include Multi-dimensional Family Therapy and Functional Family Therapy.
- Technology—Utilization of technology (e.g. Skype, video conferencing) to better connect youth with families and other formal/informal supports and to further development of their transition plans.
- Data Collection/Performance Measures—Provides accountability, changes have been made to the juvenile court case planning system. These changes will allow for data analysis, outcome/performance measurements, and reporting to monitor success and provide recommendations to system stakeholders, the governor’s office, and legislators.

➤ **Interagency Data Sharing Agreement**

The Education Collaborative orchestrated a data sharing agreement between the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Human Rights – Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning, and the Judicial Branch – State Court Administration – Juvenile Court Services.

The purpose of the agreement is to share relevant information on children who are subject to court jurisdiction under Iowa Code Chapter 232. The result will be improved outcomes regarding safety, education, family stability, and reduce the likelihood of further abuse, neglect, delinquency, and criminal conduct.

➤ **Coordinate, Consolidate, and Convene Required Advisory Groups**

There is a growing trend of funders (e.g. federal agencies, private foundations) that require advisory groups as part of funded initiatives. Many state agency staff are asked to participate on several multi-agency advisory groups created to address specific youth-related issues. Advisory groups may have similar representation, yet have a different youth focus. In addition, some of the advisory groups may replicate activities, creating additional silos within state agencies.

The ICYD Council is now offering to act as the core membership to new youth-serving advisory groups to allow state agencies to meet workgroup requirements and consolidate multiple advisory groups into the existing infrastructure of the ICYD.

The alignment of youth advisory groups will create more effective and efficient services and supports for youth and families. Strategies to reduce the inefficiency and burden of having disconnected youth councils/commissions/coalitions are to:

- Use existing councils.
- Identify and publicize existing councils.
- Compare councils side-by-side.
- Connect related efforts.
- Develop common language and complementary goals.
- Look to broad councils to oversee the coordinating bodies.
- Consolidate existing councils.⁸

The coordination of advisory groups will:

- Reduce duplication of planning and services.
- Result in cost avoidance with a more efficient use of staff time and agency resources (time, state staff and travel costs).
- Enhance collaborative opportunities, combined trainings, common use of data and information.
- Generate new funding opportunities.⁹

The ICYD Council approach will be a model for cross-agency collaboration and government efficiency.

⁸ Evennou, Danielle, (January 2011). Don't Stop Collaborating – Just Stop Creating New Collaboratives. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

⁹ *Ibid.*

➤ **Iowa Youth Survey**

The Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) is a collaborative effort led by the Department of Public Health's Division of Behavioral Health with assistance by the following agencies:

- Department of Education,
- Department of Human Rights' Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning and Statistical Analysis Center, and
- Department of Human Services.

In the fall of 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 students in 6th, 8th, and 11th grades across the state of Iowa answered questions about their attitudes and experiences regarding alcohol and other drug use and violence, and their perceptions of their peer, family, school, and neighborhood/community environments. In 2008, the survey was administered online for the first time.

IYS reports list responses to every survey question and provide total percentages and breakdowns by grade and gender. Thirty-four constructs within nine framework domains are included.

Reports are available in the following categories:

- State of Iowa,
- Counties,
- Judicial Districts
- Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Planning Regions,
- Decategorization areas,
- Department of Human Services Regions,
- School Districts*.

2018 IYS reports are posted online at <https://iowayouthsurvey.idph.state.ia.us/>. Individual school district reports can be accessed by contacting the respective district. Also available online is the Iowa Youth Survey Trend Report.

➤ **Family First Prevention Services Act**

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was signed into law on February 9, 2018. This Act reforms the federal child welfare financing streams (Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act) to provide services to families who are at risk of entering the child welfare system. Family First will restructure how the federal government spends money on child welfare to improve outcomes for children. It will prevent the need for removal by strengthening families with evidence-based family preservation services.

Family First shifts focus and resources from out-of-home placement to keeping families together and preventing children from entering foster care by allowing federal reimbursement for community-based services, such as mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and Juvenile Court Services partnered in the development of the Family First plan, to ensure qualifying services for youth in the juvenile justice system were included in the plan.

Family First will allow funding to:

- provide family reunification services for children in foster care and after their return home;
- recruit and retain high-quality foster families;
- address opioids and other substance abuse and provide services to prevent child maltreatment as a result of substance abuse;
- provide supports for youth transitioning from care;
- extend independent living services to assist former foster youth up to age 23 and extends eligibility for education and training vouchers for these youth to age 26.

Engage Additional Stakeholders

➤ **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)**

Iowa NYTD is a federal mandate for the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) to collect outcome information (via a standardized survey) from current and former youth in foster care or other out-of-home placement. DHS contracts with CJJP to collect the survey information from youth aged 17, 19, and 21.

Outcomes are derived from survey questions that measure youth across six domains:

- educational attainment,
- financial self-sufficiency,
- access to health insurance,
- experience with homelessness, and
- positive connections with adults.

The outcomes collected through the NYTD survey provides information on areas for improvements to the foster care system to better serve youth transitioning to independence.

In FFY2020, Iowa NYTD met federal compliance by surveying 89.5% of the 17-year-old population and providing a required data report highlighting outcomes¹⁰. A data report summarizing the information collected from that cohort of youth is available on the NYTD website: [bit.ly/iowaNYTD](https://sites.google.com/a/iowa.gov/national-transition-youth-database-nytd/annual-report/17-year-old-annual-reports).

From October 1, 2020, through September 2021, Iowa NYTD is completing surveys and obtaining outcomes from a new cohort of 21-year-old youth formerly in foster care.

¹⁰ <https://sites.google.com/a/iowa.gov/national-transition-youth-database-nytd/annual-report/17-year-old-annual-reports>

In addition to collecting survey results from these youth populations, Iowa NYTD will continue to positively engage youth in foster care and juvenile justice through additional outreach activities:

- “The Talking Wall”—An activity that provides an opportunity for youth to appropriately use their voice as a tool for change. In 2020, the Talking Wall was hosted at 41 different locations, included voices from 491 youth, and produced 1,466 post-it notes. Main themes from youth and young adults included: longer, more frequent and more accessible phone calls, more visits with family while in placement, better and more food at placement, more supportive staff behaviors, gender-specific services and resources, need for financial and job support upon leaving placements, and to not charge juveniles as adults in court.
- Iowa Youth Resources Website¹¹— The site features seven videos and other resources designed to help youth who are transitioning to adulthood. The videos focus on employment, education, housing, medication, and other resources. Although the information is aimed at youth who are exiting the foster care or delinquency systems, the resources provided can be used by all youth, parents, or others who work with youth. The site was created through a collaborative effort by Iowa NYTD, CJJP, the Juvenile ReEntry Systems Task Force, Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP), the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Boys’ State Training School, and other state agencies.
- Annual Creative Expressions Art Contest—This contest is open to youth (up to age 24) who have experienced foster care or other out-of-home placement. It invites youth to submit artwork that captures the given theme of the contest. Entries include a variety of art media. In FFY2020, the theme was “I show kindness by…” and there were 9 entries.
- Annual Iowa NYTD Expressive Creations Showcase—This effort allows local and state agencies to host and display previously submitted art entries. Artwork is currently on display at YSS, United Way of Central Iowa, Iowa Workforce Development and Iowa Homeless Youth Shelters.
- Partnerships—Continue to strengthen partnerships with the Iowa Foster Care Youth Council (AMP), the Iowa Aftercare Network, provider agencies, Juvenile Court System, social workers, CASA/FCRB and other state and local entities.

Overall, NYTD strives to center youth voice through compiling and publishing the survey results and providing other creative avenues for youth voice to be heard and acted upon by decisionmakers.

¹¹ <https://sites.google.com/a/iowa.gov/dhr-youth-services/>

V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IN 2021

Achieving a 95% graduation rate by 2020 is an ambitious target. Currently, graduation rates are available for 2019. The graduation rate has increased 3.3% since 2011, to 91.6%. The ICYD Council is committed to focus attention and monitor progress toward this goal. Reaching it will require continued coordinated efforts by policymakers, education systems, and multiple state and community partners. The Council's work will be refined and expanded into specific action steps to accomplish the goal.

In addition, the ICYD Council will strategically plan for the next long-term goal. The ICYD Council will examine issues and barriers impacting youth and identify potential areas to remove the barriers and improve outcomes for all youth.

To maintain focus on these efforts, the ICYD Council will continue to address the following five broad areas:

- Focus on underperforming schools and communities.
- Assess current state initiatives and maximize existing resources.
- Investigate research-based approaches and effective strategies.
- Coordinate across systems to identify and support vulnerable students.
- Engage additional stakeholders.

The ICYD Council seeks support from the Iowa Legislature and Governor's Office to continue these activities by modifying laws and policies as necessary, and providing resources needed to achieve this very ambitious goal.

Specific recommendations to support the ICYD Council are to:

- Support the ICYD Council in adopting the recommendations from *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth* report from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (pages 22-24).
- Support the ICYD Council in developing new strategies to incorporate authentic youth engagement (AYE) and positive youth development principles into state-level policy and practice, which include training staff, and engaging youth on state boards and commissions, and creative ways to involve youth.
- Provide resources to support state-level youth opportunities and youth-led initiatives (e.g. State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, Achieving Maximum Potential, Iowa Youth Congress, and Youth Action Squads).
- Identifying new and better ways to provide services and supports to Iowa's youth and families by encouraging multi-agency approaches in the development of innovative strategies and to incorporate federal initiatives that will eliminate the educational achievement gap for underrepresented students, including:
 - Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
 - Family First Prevention Services Act
 - Juvenile Justice System Improvement (formerly SMART)
 - Juvenile Reentry System Implementation
- Provide resources to continue and expand evidence-based practices and programs as they are developed and identified.

- Provide resources for the continued review and study of services for youth, through the collection and analysis of data that provides information to determine the effectiveness of the services.
- Support the ICYD Council's approach to consolidate multiple advisory groups into the existing infrastructure of the ICYD Council. The model will result in a reduction of duplication, enhanced coordination and collaboration between state agencies, and a reduction in costs.
- Support the Iowa Youth Survey. The survey is administered every two years to 6th, 8th, and 11th graders. The results are valuable to state agencies and communities in assessing self-reported youth behaviors and perceptions.
- Continue to develop ways to share information among agencies to address issues affecting youth who receive services and supports from multiple agencies.
- Support the continued use of state agency staff time to implement activities that meet the goals of the ICYD Council.

APPENDIX 1: GRADUATION RATE CALCULATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology to calculate Iowa's high school graduation rate requires that the graduating classes have statewide identification numbers for six years or longer. With this identification system, Iowa can follow the same group of students over several years and implement the first-time freshman cohort rates (students who repeated their freshman year were not included in the cohort). Below, the methodology is described for the four-year fixed cohort graduation rate and the five-year cohort graduation rate.¹²

Four-year Graduation Rates

With the statewide identification system and Student Reporting in Iowa (SRI) data, Iowa can follow the same group of students over several years and implement the first-time freshman rates (students who repeated their 9th grade year were not included). The four-year graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students (denominator) who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less by the number of first-time 9th graders enrolled minus the number of students who transferred out plus the total number of students who transferred in.

Iowa Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate = $(FG + TIG) / (F + TI - TO)$

FG - First time 9th grade students in fall four years ago and graduated within four years

TIG - Students who transferred in grades 9 to 12 and graduated in four consecutive school years

F - First time 9th grade students in fall four years ago

TI - Transferred in the first time 9th graders in grades 9 to 12

TO - Transfer out (including emigrates and deceased)

First-time freshmen and transferred-in students include: resident students attending a public school in the district; non-resident students open-enrolled in, whole-grade sharing in, or tuition in; and foreign students on Visa. Those excluded are: home-schooled and nonpublic schooled students; public school students enrolled in another district, but taking courses on a part-time basis; and foreign exchange students. Students receiving regular diplomas are included as graduates in the numerator. Early graduates are included in the original cohort. All students who take longer to graduate (including students with IEPs) are included in the denominator, but not in the numerator for the four-year rate.

Five-year Graduation Rates

The five-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students (denominator) who graduate with a regular high school diploma in five years or less by the number of first-time 9th graders enrolled minus the number of students who transferred out plus the total number of students who transferred in. The five-year cohort rate will maintain the same denominator as the previous year's four-year rate, simply adding students who graduate in the fifth year to the numerator.

¹² <https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

Iowa Five Year Cohort Graduation Rate = (FG + TIG) / (F + TI - TO)

FG - First time 9th grade students in fall five years ago and graduated in five years

TIG - Students who transferred in grades 9 to 12 and graduated in four consecutive school years

F - First time 9th grade students in fall five years ago

TI - Transferred in the first time 9th graders in grades 9 to 12

TO - Transfer out (including emigrates and deceased)

Dropout Rates

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definitions used for dropouts include students who satisfy one or more of the following conditions:

- Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled as of Count Day of the current year or
- Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and left the school before the previous summer and
- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district-approved educational program; and
- Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
 - a. transfer to another public school district, private school, or state or district-approved educational program,
 - b. temporary school-recognized absence for suspension or illness,
 - c. death, or
 - d. move out of the state or leave the country

A student who has left the regular program to attend an adult program designed to earn a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) or an adult high school diploma administered by a community college is considered a dropout. However, a student who enrolls in an alternative school or alternative program administered by a public school district is not considered a dropout.

The numerator of the dropout rate is the total number of dropouts in the school year for the grade span being calculated and the denominator is the total fall enrollment of grades for the grade span being calculated.