

HHS Alignment

DECEMBER 2022

BACKGROUND

There are extensive connections between Iowa's public health and human services efforts to help all Iowans live safe, stable, and healthy lives. With this in mind, the Iowa Departments of Public Health (IDPH) and Human Services (DHS) began a joint effort in October of 2020 to identify strategies to best align and integrate programs, practices, and policies of the two departments. This work included extensive outreach to department staff and community stakeholders to understand how a new Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) can improve delivery of services and most effectively leverage state and federal funding.

In March 2022, the project culminated in a set of recommended changes aimed at creating a fully aligned Iowa HHS system. This initiative will combine IDPH and DHS into one, single, department. A high-level organizational chart outlining major functions of a unified department was also released in March. The recommended changes were summarized into five goal impact areas:

1. An integrated organizational structure that brings like functions and services together.
2. Shared direction among state staff and partners and shared connection with the big picture.
3. A welcoming and efficient 'front door' to health and human services.
4. Closed loops and warm handoffs to connect Iowans seamlessly to services and supports that are right for them.
5. Improved use and integration of data to make informed decisions and provide seamless service to Iowans.

IDPH and DHS have launched a joint implementation team to act on these recommended changes. Foundational, administratively focused projects were identified as initial necessary areas of focus to create the base for a unified department. The implementation team initiated more than 20 priority projects for completion by September 30, 2022. A second phase of projects has begun reflecting work that needs to be completed between October 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

ALIGNMENT LEGISLATION

On June 14, 2022, [HF 2578](#) was signed by Iowa Governor Reynolds, in which Division XI creates a Department of Health and Human Services and provides a one-year transition period for IDPH and DHS to merge current functions into the new department. The legislation requires the transition departments submit an initial written plan, detailing how functions will be merged. The transition is to accomplish the following:

1. More efficiently and effectively manage health and human services programs that are the responsibility of the state.
2. Establish a health and human services policy for the state.
3. Promote health and the quality of life in the health and human services field.

ALIGNMENT TRANSITION PLAN

IDPH and DHS jointly published the Iowa Health and Human Services Alignment Transition Plan on September 30, 2022. This plan describes the process, stakeholder and staff engagement, timeline, and all tasks identified by the departments as necessary to complete the transition into the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. The plan can be found on the [HHS alignment website](https://hhsalignment.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/resources/2022-10/HHS_Alignment_Transition_Plan_2022_FINAL.pdf) (https://hhsalignment.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/resources/2022-10/HHS_Alignment_Transition_Plan_2022_FINAL.pdf).

FUNDING

Transition costs will be funded by IDPH and DHS within existing budgets and with one-time carryforward funds.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE & ACTION PLAN

#	Milestone	Target Completion Date	Completion Date	Implementation Update Description
1	Transition plan posted to HHS website	9/30/2022	9/30/2022	Plan posted to the IDPH, DHS, and HHS Alignment websites
2	Bill draft submitted to LSA	10/1/2022	10/1/2022	Draft Iowa Code update language necessary to establish the new department submitted to LSA for consideration in the 2023 legislative session
3	Transition plan quarterly update posted to HHS website	12/31/2022		
4	Transition plan quarterly update posted to HHS website	3/31/2023		
5	Transition plan quarterly update posted to HHS website	6/31/2023		

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