

# Iowa Child Welfare By the Numbers - Calendar Year 2014

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## **Child Abuse Definitions:** <http://dhs.iowa.gov/child-abuse>

The Iowa Department of Human Services began Differential Response in January 2014. The new system, consists of two pathways, Family Assessment and Child Abuse Assessment, to respond to allegations of neglect and abuse. The Family Assessment pathway responds to low risk allegations of neglect and does not result in a finding of neglect. As a result we expect to see some changes to the data in this report that make comparisons to past performance unreliable. For example, the total number of confirmed or founded allegations of abuse and neglect were significantly lower because of the diversion of neglect cases to the family assessment pathway. This causes an increase in the percentage of other types of abuse such as physical or sexual abuse and could lead to incorrect conclusions when comparing 2014 percentages to prior years. Differential Response information and data: <http://dhs.iowa.gov/child-welfare/differential-response>

## **Assessment data and findings:**

- 23,562 assessments for child abuse or neglect in calendar 2014 - down 10 percent from 2013 and within normal variation year to year
  - 7,769(33%) Family assessments were conducted and 15,793(67%) Child Abuse assessments were conducted.
  - 65 percent of Child Abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “no abuse,” similar to past years.
- 7,429 children subject to abuse or neglect. Of those children:
  - 6,163 were subject of “founded” abuse
  - 1,266 were subject of a “confirmed” abuse. A “confirmed” abuse is minor, isolated, and not likely to re-occur, and the perpetrator is not placed on the child abuse registry.
- 49 percent of abused or neglected children were age 5 or younger (similar to past years).
- Of all child abuse or neglect:
  - 70 percent was neglect (denial of critical care), a decrease from prior years
  - 12 percent was physical
  - 7 percent was sexual
  - 9 percent was presence of illegal drugs in body

Allegations of abuse and neglect are evaluated by a central intake unit in Des Moines. The intake is accepted if the allegation would be abuse if proven true. Accepted intakes are assessed in person by county-based DHS child protective workers. Most allegations are not founded, aligned with National data. When abuse is founded, a separate group of DHS case managers supervise ongoing services for children and their families. Those services are performed by non-government social service agencies under performance contracts.

## **Average Caseloads:**

- 182 DHS child protective workers were assigned an average of 13 cases a month, including cases alleging adult abuse. Similar caseload to previous year.
- 349 DHS case managers had an average child welfare caseload of 30, similar to previous year. In addition to supervising child welfare services, workers attempt to visit every child and their parent every month.

## **Strategies and Results of Iowa's Child Welfare System**

- Use consistent best-practice assessment of risk and safety.
- Pursue permanency and family connections for at-risk children
- Provide voluntary, free, non-DHS help through the Community Care Program for families with low re-abuse risk.
- Reduce racial disparities. Gap is narrowing for both African American and Native American families.
- Engage families in plan for improvement, especially via family team decision making meetings and parent mentors.
- Provide performance-based contracts aligned with safety and permanency outcomes for families.
- Focus on best-practice results (lowering rates of re-abuse, children have permanency and stability, etc.) Results:
  - 95 % of children receiving a family assessment were abuse-free in six months following assessment.
  - 97.8 % of families who engage in Community Care do not experience court intervention within six months.
  - 94.3% of families who engage in Community Care were abuse-free in six months following assessment.
  - 92 % of all abused or neglected children were abuse-free in six months following assessment.
  - 85 % of children who were reunified were living with their families 12 months later.

**The Cost of Child Welfare: FY14 Actual Expenditures**

<b>Major Services</b>	<b>State dollars*</b>	<b>Other dollars*</b>	<b>Total*</b>	<b>Average Monthly Number Served - FY14</b>
Family centered services	- \$ 4.7	\$24	\$28.7	5,053 families served (at least one child per family)
Family foster care	- \$10.2	\$ 8.4	\$18.6	1,795 children in licensed foster care
Group care	- \$17.8	\$ 8.8	\$26.6	717 children in highly structured group settings
Adoption subsidies	- \$39.8	\$32.4	\$72.2	9,373 (subsidies paid until adopted child reaches 18)
Aged-out program (PAL)	- \$ 3.3	\$ 0.0	\$ 3.3	425 aged-out youth receiving stipends, counseling
Shelter care	- \$ 7.3	\$ 1.1	\$ 8.4	154 children served in average month
DHS social workers	- \$23.5	\$36.8	\$60.3	

\* millions