

## 2021 CHILD WELFARE BY THE NUMBERS

Child abuse definitions: <https://dhs.iowa.gov/child-abuse/what-is-child-abuse>

### Assessment data and findings:

- 35,593 assessments for child abuse or neglect in calendar year 2021\*
  - 6,727 (19%) family assessments were conducted
    - Family assessments involved 8,725 children
  - 28,886 (81%) child abuse assessments were conducted
    - 20,323 (70%) of child abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “not confirmed”
      - Not confirmed child abuse assessments involved 19,805 unique children
    - 1,577 (6%) of child abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “confirmed” abuse
      - “Confirmed” abuse means that the abuse was minor and isolated and not likely to re-occur; and the perpetrator is not placed on the child abuse registry
      - Confirmed child abuse assessments involved 1,922 unique children
    - 6,966 (24%) of child abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “founded” abuse
      - Founded child abuse assessments involved 9,370 unique children
- Of the total number of abused or neglected children, 5,342 (47%) were 5 years of age or younger, 2,850 (25%) were between 6-10 years, and the remaining 3,094 (28%) were older than 11 years.
- Of all substantiated child abuse or neglect:
  - 55% was neglect (denial of critical care)
  - 23% was dangerous substance
  - 9% was presence of illegal drugs in a child’s body
  - 7% was physical abuse
  - 4% was sexual abuse
  - 1% was allows access by a registered sex offender
  - The categories of allows access to obscene materials, mental injury, child sex trafficking, prostitution of a child, and bestiality in the presence of a minor each made up less than 1% of the total substantiated child abuse or neglect

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 protection workers. Most allegations are not confirmed, as indicated in the data above and as 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-governmental social service organizations under performance-based contracts.

\*It’s noted the total number of assessments for child abuse or neglect in calendar year 2021 increased by 5,442 assessments as compared to calendar year 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is believed to be a large factor. There was a significant decrease in the total number of assessments in calendar year 2020, as most mandatory reporters were not routinely seeing children and therefore were making less reports of suspected child abuse. This year’s assessment totals are more in line with where we were pre-pandemic.

### Average Caseloads:

- 218 DHS child protective workers were assigned an average of 16 cases a month, including cases alleging adult abuse.
- 301 DHS case managers had an average child welfare caseload of 25. 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
- 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 partners.
- Focus on best-practice results (lowering rates of re-abuse, children have permanency and stability, etc.)
- Provide performance-based contracts aligned with safety and permanency outcomes for families. Iowa transitioned to

Family-Centered Services (FCS) contracts to align with Family First legislation beginning July 1, 2020.

Results for January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021 under the FCS contracts include:

**Non-Agency Voluntary Services**

- 99.62% of families referred for Non-Agency Voluntary Services safely maintained the children within their own home during the case.

Family Preservation Services (Results for January 1, 2021 through October 13, 2021- time frame limited due to data availability)

- 88.35% of children were not removed from their homes during provision of Family Preservation Services.

**Agency Solution Based Casework (SBC)**

- 94.64% of families referred for services safely maintained the children within their own home or with kin/fictive kin caregivers during the case.

**The Cost of Child welfare: FY21 Actual Expenditure**

| <b>Major Services</b>    | <b>State dollars</b> | <b>Other dollars</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Average</b> | <b>Monthly Number Served – FY21</b>             |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------|---|
| Family centered services | - \$1.2              | \$33.5               | \$34.7       | 4,714          | families served (at least one child per family) |
| Family foster care       | - \$8.5              | \$ 6.1               | \$14.6       | 1,471          | children in licensed foster care                |
| Group care               | - \$17.2             | \$1.3                | \$18.5       | 333            | children in highly structured group settings    |
| Adoption subsidies       | - \$33.0             | \$45.0               | \$78.0       | 10,120         | (subsidies paid until adopted child reaches 18) |
| Aged-out program (PAL)   | - \$0.4              | \$3.1                | \$3.5        | 380            | aged-out youth receiving stipends, counseling   |
| Shelter care             | - \$3.5              | \$0.3                | \$3.8        | 103            | children served in average month                |
| DHS social workers       | - \$30.5             | \$39.1               | \$69.6       | *millions      |   |