

Summary of DHS' COVID-19 Response

Updated: October 19, 2021

The following is a chronology of the Department of Human Services' (DHS') response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. DHS is taking a number of steps to ensure the safety of our team members and of those we serve while ensuring continued access to critical services.

Before any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the State of Iowa, DHS began analyzing our operations across the agency and conferring with other states. Our leadership team quickly mobilized to assess our emergency response protocols and tailor those plans to this unique pandemic. Things progressed very quickly, as did our response.

March 2020

- Ensured all staff had equipment to work from home
- Developed pre-visit checklist for member visits and unit exposure incident report forms and procedures
- All staff were sent home to work by March 20, 2020

March 6, 2020: Director Garcia notified Glenwood Resource Center (GRC) staff of the positive case in Omaha, encouraged good prevention measures, and informed them DHS was exploring flexibility in our approach to human resources, including sick leave policy.

March 10, 2020: Director Garcia notified all DHS staff which:

- Provided protocols for potential exposure
- Limited all non-essential business travel
- Encouraged suspending personal travel
- Provided detail on sick leave
- Notified staff of coming visitor restrictions at our facilities
- Provided good prevention measures

March 11, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [Informational Letter \(IL\) regarding billing services related to Coronavirus and COVID-19](#).

March 12, 2020: DHS notified guardians and loved ones of visitor restrictions to all DHS facilities. The message indicated all visitors will be screened for illness and risk to previous exposure, and those permitted entry will be asked to take further precautionary measures to mitigate risk of potential exposure.

March 12, 2020: DHS distributed a supervisor toolkit, which provided guidance on:

- Business travel
- Personal travel
- Reporting potential exposure
- Staff leave
- Telecommuting

- Insurance coverage
- Visiting clients at home or in person.
 - This included a screening checklist for social workers conducting home visits.

March 13, 2020: DHS notified guardians and loved ones that we've suspended all in-person visitation, with limited exception.

March 13, 2020: Director Garcia emailed all DHS staff to notify them of initial steps taken to protect those we serve and our team.

March 14, 2020: DHS posted childcare guidance on the agency website. Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R) also sent this guidance to childcare providers via email.

March 14, 2020: DHS announced measures to ensure access to childcare and additional financial and operational assistance to childcare providers.

March 14, 2020: Director Garcia emailed Des Moines Area and Dallas county team members to notify them of community-spread of COVID-19 and to inform them that our leadership team was meeting on March 15, 2020, to work through multiple contingency plans.

March 15, 2020: Director Garcia emailed Des Moines Area and Dallas county team members to notify them that we are shifting to telework due to community-spread of COVID-19.

March 15, 2020: Director Garcia emailed all DHS staff to notify them of our shift to telework in phases based on location and risk.

March 15, 2020: DHS began screening all Mental Health and Disability (MHDS) facility patients for COVID-19 including signs and symptoms, which includes daily temperature checks.

March 16, 2020: Director Garcia emailed all DHS staff with updated information on our travel and leave policy. DHS updated the supervisor toolkit (version 2) with additional guidance on our travel and leave policy.

March 16, 2020: DHS issued COVID-19 guidance on home visitation and group care settings.

March 16, 2020: DHS issued a [press release](#) announcing measures to protect team members and mitigate spread, while ensuring continued services to lowans.

March 17, 2020: DHS held an all-county phone call to request information to assess the need for childcare for essential workforce. DHS notified the counties that we are working to stand up alternative childcare sites for essential workforce.

Essential workforce includes:

- All hospital staff;
- All healthcare providers in private practice and all direct care staff;

- Staff who provide critical government infrastructure: examples include: social services, child protection services, public health officials, tax collection, corrections and other public safety;
- Emergency responders;
- Food service workers, including grocery store staff and limited restaurant staff to include supporting take-away options; and
- Others as approved by the Director of Human Services.

DHS issued a press release announcing [DHS Submitting Federal Waivers to Ensure Continued Access to Medical Assistance and Flexibility to Meet the Needs of Iowans](#).

DHS updated the supervisor toolkit (version 3) with additional guidance on travel, sick leave and congregate meal settings.

DHS issued a compilation of Adult, Children and Family Services (ACFS) guidance in response to COVID-19.

DHS implemented policy changes for Childcare Assistance (CCA) and the Iowa Quality Rating System that allows billing of additional absence days per month and extension of quality ratings for currently rated childcare programs.

March 18, 2020: DHS procured 300 non-contact, infrared body thermometers for distribution to facilities, local offices, and central office sites.

DHS published a [COVID-19 DHS Resources webpage](#) to gather all DHS COVID-19 materials in one place for all stakeholders. DHS issued guidance for social workers and contractors related to drug testing scattered-site supervised apartment living, dependent adult assessment/evaluation, ongoing adult services and in-home health related care (IHHRC).

Iowa Medicaid submitted an emergency Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP) state plan amendment (SPA) to extend eligibility to CHIP members beyond their certification period, provide additional time for CHIP members to submit renewal or verification materials, and waive the eligibility verification requirements. Iowa Medicaid submitted our first 1135 waiver request to allow flexibility around 24-hour nursing in hospitals, to allow flexibility in staffing, care and housing at Intermediate Care Facilities for the Intellectually Disabled (ICF/ID), to allow flexibility to nursing facilities (NF) around admission screenings and to allow NF extra time to complete re-certification and to submit plans of correction. Iowa submitted an 1115 waiver request to allow continued eligibility for CHIP members who age out during the national emergency, allow continuous eligibility for all Medicaid enrollees, and expand home delivered meals services.

March 19, 2020: DHS issued two policy guidance statements to staff: Hoover [central office] Mail Routing Services and Electronic Signature Process.

Iowa Medicaid published an [IL with updated information regarding billing services related to Coronavirus and COVID-19](#).

DHS procured 114 cellular phones and 85 MiFi units to facilitate staff work from home capabilities.

March 19, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter.

March 20, 2020: DHS issued updated childcare guidance. This updated guidance focused on hygiene and cleanliness, health, social distancing and reporting. It also asked all parents who are able to keep their kids home to do so, and to also limit childcare settings to 10 per room.

Iowa Medicaid began publishing daily updates to the COVID-19 provider tool kit with frequently asked questions (FAQs).

DHS issued COVID-19 guidance on caseworker visits with children in foster care.

The DHS Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) began making calls to emergency managers across the state and people who have identified themselves with needs related to anxiety and special needs. Information about DBHRT is shared with the Homeland Security Emergency Management and Emergency Management staff as appropriate.

March 21, 2020: DHS published a new childcare locator map, which is updated daily to assist essential workforce in finding safe, quality childcare.

DHS issued guidance in response to COVID-19 on group care, shelter, psychiatric mental institutes for children (PMIC), residential-based supportive community living (RBSCCL) and juvenile detention. DHS also issued FAQs for residential settings in response to COVID-19.

March 22, 2020: DHS and the Governor announced, via press conference, new efforts to launch emergency childcare settings for essential workforce. DHS worked closely with the Department of Education along with all 99 counties, local superintendents, health systems and local community partners to assess need and identify site locations. DHS developed a streamlined process to stand up sites and assist them.

DHS published a webpage with forms and information to assist communities in establishing temporary emergency childcare sites.

March 23, 2020: DHS submitted waivers to the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to request flexibility in the Food Assistance program.

March 25, 2020: DHS drew additional federal funding for increased FMAP, as allowed under (Families First Coronavirus Response Act: H.R. 6201):

- \$64,310,628.67 for Title XIX;
- \$ 1,754,465.85 for CHIP;
- \$ 52,997.47 for Money Follows the Person

Iowa Medicaid created a dedicated COVID-19 email account to gather and track provider inquiries. Iowa Medicaid received CMS approval of our first 1135 waiver. Iowa Medicaid submitted a Home- and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Appendix K waiver request to:

- allow expanded home delivered meals, homemaker and companion services to all HCBS waiver members,
- remove limitations on respite care,
- allow providers to exceed service limitations, allow flexibilities for member reassessments and reevaluations, prior authorizations and electronic signatures,
- allow for parents and family members to provide direct services, if necessary, allow payment for services to support a HCBS member when necessary supports are needed for care in a hospital or short stay NF, and allow for expanded settings for HCBS.

DHS issued updated guidance on home visitation and contact for child welfare family-centered services. The updated guidance focused on contact requirements for specific child welfare services, family team decision-making meetings, and family interactions. The updated guidance also included HIPAA compliant teleconferencing methods.

March 26: 2020: DHS notified all DHS facility staff and all DHS social workers they must be tested for COVID-19 if they have fever or emerging cough per updated guidance from IDPH.

March 26 and 27, 2020: DHS staff attended HSEMD webinars, *Public Assistance Applicant Briefing*, in preparation for FEMA-4483-DR public assistance program funding request.

Iowa Medicaid hosted provider conference calls to answer questions.

March 27, 2020: DHS issued a press release announcing [DHS Takes Multiple Steps to Ensure Food Security, Including New Online Options Through Amazon and Walmart](#). DHS and the Department of Corrections (DOC) reached an agreement to pause admissions and discharges to the Civil Commitment Unit for Sexual Offenders (CCUSO).

DHS issued COVID-19 guidance on family interactions for children in foster care.

March 30, 2020: DHS issued updated guidance on home visitation and contact for child welfare family-centered services. The updated guidance included steps to take if have a fever of 100.4 or above or an emerging cough.

March 31, 2020: Director Garcia sent an all staff email to emphasize the importance of communication and to highlight our efforts to protect our team.

DHS began hosting twice-weekly conference calls with legislators and legislative staff to provide ongoing updates to our COVID-19 response.

Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Pharmacy Billing Services Related to Coronavirus and COVID-19](#). Iowa Medicaid received approval of the HCBS Appendix K waiver.

March 31 – April 1, 2020: DHS procures 92 gallons of hand sanitizer, procedural masks, N-95 masks, and face shields for distribution to facilities, field and other frontline staff.

From March 2020 to June 2021

- Monitored provider and service changes related to pandemic (ongoing)

- Monitored waiver changes related to services brought on by pandemic (family allowed to be providers, respite allowed while caregivers work, removal of annual cost limit for respite, ETP's for minor siblings to provide services, etc.) (ongoing)
- Develop ways to meet with staff and members via video platforms.
- Reported COVID exposure and vaccination trends for staff and members to MDHS leadership (ongoing)
- Monitored updates to the DHS supervisor toolkit and notified staff of changes
- Prepared for staff to return to the office and face-to-face visits with members

April 1, 2020: DHS announces [partnership with Cedar Ridge Distillery and the Department of Corrections to provide hand sanitizer to frontline DHS staff and childcare providers.](#)

Iowa Medicaid submitted a second 1135 waiver request to modify deadlines for NF resident assessments, suspend the two-week aide supervision requirement by a registered nurse (RN), suspend supervision of hospice aides by an RN every 14 days; and waive mandatory CPR training for Psychiatric Medical Institutions for Children (PMIC) and hospitals.

Iowa Medicaid submitted a COVID Disaster SPA request to:

- suspend cost-sharing for all members and suspend premiums, allow coverage of COVID-19 testing for uninsured individuals,
- expand presumptive eligibility determinations made by hospitals,
- allow flexibilities on residency when an individual is evacuated for medical reasons related to disaster or otherwise absent from the state due to the disaster with intent to return to Iowa;
- add HCBS service availability of meals, companion, homemaker and case management direct services;
- expand HCBS service settings and
- allow retainer payments for habilitation members.

April 2, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding DHS waivers and frequently asked questions \(FAQs\) regarding COVID-19](#) and an [IL with updates on billing services for telehealth related to Coronavirus and COVID-19.](#)

April 3, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

April 4, 2020: DHS held a family town hall for Glenwood Resource Center (GRC) families and loved ones. Director Garcia provided a detailed update on our COVID-19 response. Families were appreciative and understanding of the steps we've taken.

April 6, 2020: DHS published tips and resources for teens in foster care in response to COVID-19 on the DHS website.

April 7, 2020: Director Garcia sent and all staff email to address the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and the associated sick leave and expanded family and medical leave. This email informed staff that all of DHS is exempted from these expanded benefits.

DHS issued letters to foster parents, social workers, and child welfare service contractors. These letters reflected a transition to virtual options for family interactions, with exception, in response to COVID-19.

The Attorney General's (AG's) office has been partnering with DHS staff to host discussions on reasonable efforts look like during the pandemic. Ellen Ramsey-Kacena drafted model motions and proposed orders for virtual visitation and worked with the AG's Prosecuting Attorney Training Consortium (PATC) to disseminate these to county attorneys.

April 8, 2020: DHS issued a letter to child welfare service contractors providing Safety Plan Services and Family Safety, Risk, and Permanency (FSRP) Services. The letter provided guidance on service delivery regarding in-person contact and transitioning, with exception to videoconferencing methods.

DHS updated guidance for group settings and FAQ's for residential settings to reflect the transition to virtual options for family interactions, with some exceptions.

April 9, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding the expansion of home-delivered meals, homemaker and companion services](#) during COVID-19. Iowa Medicaid updated the online list of Medicaid flexibilities requested in response to COVID-19 to include the implementation date or status of each request.

April 10, 2020: Director Garcia emailed a video message to all DHS staff to offer words of encouragement and to encourage family time over the weekend.

Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

April 13, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published a webpage for members with eligibility criteria for, and information on how to access, expanded home-delivered meals, homemaker and companion services.

April 14, 2020: DBHRT conducted stress management and self-care Zoom sessions. Two sessions were conducted for Homeland Security Emergency Management staff.

April 15, 2020: The DHS COVID-19 Child Support FAQs were updated to reflect the latest information on child support being withheld from pandemic unemployment benefits.

DHS sent a rapid response strike team to Tama, IA for community assistance. NOTE: Work is continuing on expanding this service.

April 16, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding prior authorizations \(PAs\), claims filing for managed care](#) during COVID-19.

DBHRT conducted a stress management and self-care Zoom session for Homeland Security Emergency Management staff, IDPH staff and Governor's Office staff.

April 17, 2020: DHS issued guidance on caring for masks in the 'Inside DHS' staff newsletter. This provided details on the types of masks distributed to DHS staff and how to properly clean and store them.

All DHS facilities began requiring the use of masks (surgical and/or cloth) for all employees working with patients and/or on the wards, units, houses and cottages.

Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

April 18, 2020: The DHS targeted case management (TCM) team began providing direct support to the State's contact tracing efforts.

April 20, 2020: Iowa Medicaid issued Medicaid income guidance to address questions regarding the impact of stimulus payments on client participation at facilities. The stimulus payment will not be counted as income subject to client participation. Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts at the Hawki Board meeting.

April 21, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter.

April 22 and 23, 2020: DHS nurses conducted testing for long-term care facility staff in the Tama area at the Toledo Juvenile Home. DHS provided the facility and logistical assistance.

DHS received three federal waivers from the Office of Child Care regarding its Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) operations. The waivers address annual inspections, federal background checks, and copayments from families receiving CCA.

April 24, 2020: Iowa Medicaid received approval of emergency CHIP SPA.

April 24, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

April 27, 2020: DHS announced the first resident to presumptively test positive at any of DHS' six facilities.

May 1, 2020: The resident at WRC who had presumptively tested positive for COVID-19 was confirmed to be positive. Two additional residents at WRC tested positive. To protect other residents in the home, WRC residents who test positive are transitioned to another house on campus designated for positive cases. As their symptoms improve and they meet specific criteria, they will transition to a step down house before returning to their primary residence. Ongoing updates on testing data at our facilities and a summary of our response specific to our facilities can be found [here](#).

May 1, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

May 5, 2020: DHS [announced additional support for childcare providers](#). The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides \$3.5 billion in discretionary funding for the Childcare and Development Block Grant, also known as the Childcare Development Fund (CCDF). DHS received a supplemental allocation of \$31.9M on April 14, 2020, and developed a [COVID-19 Childcare Sustainability Plan](#) to dispense these funds to support childcare providers during the pandemic.

DHS' COVID-19 Childcare Sustainability Plan will use CARES Act funds to:

- Provide a monthly stipend of \$2,000 to open licensed centers and \$500 to open registered homes,
- Provide an additional monthly stipend of \$2,000 to licensed centers and \$500 to registered homes providing a 25 percent discount to essential services personnel,
- Pay providers for unlimited absences and full-day care for school-age children,
- Provide hand sanitizer and other cleaning supplies directly to providers,
- Cover the cost of background checks for employees at temporary emergency sites,
- Waive CCA family co-pays and provide full tuition amounts to providers serving CCA families,
- Provide a rejuvenation grant to providers who have closed to assist them in re-opening.

May 5, 2020: Iowa Medicaid received approval of its second 1135 waiver.

May 6, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding 2020 Civil Money Penalty \(CMP\) grants for communicative technology during COVID-19](#). Iowa Medicaid sends CARES Act Medicaid and CHIP Provider Distribution information to CMS. CMS will use this information to determine payments to Medicaid specific providers in Iowa.

May 8, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

May 11, 2020: DHS issued a [press release](#) announcing additional financial support for group care and shelter care providers. The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided additional funds to the State of Iowa to prevent, prepare for and respond to the pandemic.

DHS' COVID-19 Child Welfare Support Plan will use CARES Act funds to:

- Pay group and shelter providers a supplemental daily rate.
- Provide technology grants to providers who give direct support to parents and children who are in foster care or at risk of foster care placement.
- Provide a one-time \$500 payment to foster parents who have a child placed in their home who is directly impacted by COVID-19.

May 12, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts at Medical Assistance Advisory Council (MAAC) meeting.

May 13, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts at Council on Human Services meeting.

May 14, 2020: Since the May 6 announcement of CMP grants funding for communicative technology during COVID-19, Iowa Medicaid had approved 53 applications (65 facilities) for more than \$148,000.

May 15, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

May 15, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an IL [regarding HCBS Retainer Payments](#)

May 18, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter. Iowa Medicaid received approval of Disaster SPA 20-008.

May 22, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

May 27, 2020: DHS launches [Covid Recovery Iowa](#), a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funded program offering free counseling to any Iowan who has been affected, in any way, by the COVID-19 public health emergency. DHS contracted with five providers throughout the state to provide counseling, virtual activities, referrals and help finding resources.

May 29, 2020: DHS issued a [press release](#) announcing submission another federal waiver to Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to ensure continued expanded access to food. This federal waiver allows for continued increased benefits for current and newly eligible applicants. DHS increased June Food Assistance benefits to the maximum allowable amount per household. If a household was not already receiving the maximum amount for June, the additional benefits were added to their EBT card with their normal monthly benefits.

May 29, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

June 1, 2020: The [application for COVID-19 Testing Coverage](#) is posted on the DHS website.

June 2, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an IL [regarding COVID-19 Testing Available to Uninsured Individuals](#).

June 5, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

June 9, 2020: Collection Services Center distributed a total of \$8,199,174.16 to families from federal stimulus (after appeals timelines have expired) and regular child support processing. This is the largest distribution ever recorded (previous record was just over \$3 million).

June 12, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

June 15, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts at Hawki Board meeting.

June 18, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter. Iowa Medicaid shared information with providers about additional distributions from the federal Provider Relief Fund to eligible Medicaid and CHIP providers.

June 19, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

June 24, 2020: DHS announced the distribution plan for \$76,268,223 in Food Assistance benefits for Iowa Families who lost access to free or reduced price meals due to school closures.

June 26, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

June 30, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an IL [regarding COVID-19 Relief Rate Add-on Payments](#) for nursing facilities, skilled nursing facilities and Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) providers.

June 30, 2020: Iowa Medicaid submitted to CMS a disaster SPA along with other required authority documents to make COVID-19 Relief Rate payments available to Medicaid certified skilled nursing facilities and nursing facilities during the period of the federal public health emergency. Iowa Medicaid submitted to CMS a disaster SPA to implement dental relief payments. Iowa Medicaid submitted required documentation to CMS regarding the retainer payments to HCBS and Habilitation providers issued for dates of service in April 2019.

July 2021

- Staff returned to offices to work; most doing hybrid of telecommuting and office; ensure all staff have DHS telework policy signed and in personnel file
- Return to face-to-face visit with members with pre-visit screening tool

July 1, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced an [extension of waiving all co-pays, premiums and contributions through August](#).

July 9, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an IL [regarding COVID-19 Enhanced Dental Payment](#).

July 10, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

July 17, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

July 20, 2020: Iowa Medicaid received CMS approval for COVID-19 Relief Rate payments for nursing facilities.

July 20, 2020: Iowa Medicaid received CMS approval for COVID-19 Relief Rate payments for nursing facilities.

July 23, 2020: One student at Boys State Training School (BSTS) tested positive. This is the first student positive at BSTS. The positive student was removed from his cottage and separated from other students. All students on campus are being tested. We've deep cleaned and disinfected the cottages. Students are being offered masks. Nurses are explaining the importance of masks and additional hygiene measures during known positives on campus. All staff who've been in contact with positive staff are being tested. All teachers and school personnel are being tested. There is no PPE re-use at this time and staff are required to use surgical, procedural or N95 masks only—no cloth masks. Nurses are spot checking to ensure proper PPE use. All guardians are being notified. Boys State Training School is at phase 1, with on-campus visits temporarily suspended, virtual visits will be available.

July 23, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter.

July 24, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

July 25, 2020: We have temporarily suspended admission to BSTS to ensure we are able to separate positive students to prevent further spread.

July 26, 2020: There are now 5 positive staff and 12 positive students at BSTS.

July 28, 2020: Fiscal received notice that our Request for Public Assistance (RPA) from FEMA was approved. The next steps are to complete a Risk Assessment and the Funding Agreement. Fiscal is in the process of gathering all the required documentation for the grant pre-award risk assessment and funding agreement.

July 29, 2020: There are now 8 positive staff and 14 positive students at BSTS.

July 31, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

August 7, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

August 4, 2020: Iowa Medicaid submits its third 1135 waiver flexibility request to CMS to temporarily allow payment for personal care services rendered by legally responsible individuals, including family caregivers.

August 7, 2020: CMS approves Iowa Medicaid's third 1135 waiver flexibility request submitted on August 4, 2020.

August 13, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts at the MAAC meeting. Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Grants for Home- and Community-Based Services \(HCBS\), Substance Use Disorder \(SUD\), and Mental Health \(MH\) Providers](#).

August 17, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts at the Hawki Board meeting.

August 18, 2020: Iowa Medicaid added [FAQs](#) and a [payment matrix](#) regarding the CRR Add-On payments that were announced June 30, 2020.

September 4, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

September 9, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding HCBS Person Centered Planning Considerations during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#).

September 11, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter.

September 18, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

September 30, 2020: There are 4 positive staff and 6 positive residents at GRC. The residents have been quarantined in a designated COVID house.

October 2, 2020: There are 7 positive staff and 6 positive residents at GRC.

October 5, 2020: There are 10 positive staff and 6 positive residents at GRC. There are 11 positive staff and 8 positive residents at WRC.

October 6, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding extending the deadline for HCBS, SUD, and MH providers to apply for CARES Act grants through the Department.](#)

October 6, 2020: There are 11 positive staff and 14 positive residents at GRC. There are 11 positive staff and 9 positive residents at WRC.

October 7, 2020: There are 14 positive staff and 14 positive residents at GRC. There are 13 positive staff and 11 positive residents at WRC.

October 8, 2020: There are 18 positive staff and 14 positive residents at GRC. There are 17 positive staff and 12 positive residents at WRC.

October 9, 2020: There are 25 positive staff and 15 positive residents at GRC. There are 20 positive staff and 15 positive residents at WRC.

October 12, 2020: There are 26 positive staff and 15 positive residents at GRC. There are 21 positive staff and 15 positive residents at WRC.

October 13, 2020: Director Garcia and Iowa Medicaid presented information to stakeholders regarding the possible end dates for the Medicaid flexibilities and waivers put in place due to COVID-19.

October 13, 2020: There are 25 positive staff and 15 positive residents at GRC. There are 19 positive staff and 15 positive residents at WRC.

October 14, 2020: There are 29 positive staff and 21 positive residents at GRC. There are 19 positive staff and 19 positive residents at WRC.

October 15, 2020: Iowa Medicaid submitted a second Appendix K request and a new Disaster SPA to allow e-learning for specific services under the HCBS BI, ID and home-based habilitation programs.

October 16, 2020: There are 32 positive staff and 21 positive residents at GRC. There are 24 positive staff and 20 positive residents at WRC.

October 19, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts to the Hawki Board.

October 26, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding 2020 Civil Money Penalty \(CMP\) Grants for In-Person Visitation Aids during COVID-19.](#)

October 28, 2020: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding 2020 Civil Money Penalty \(CMP\) Grants for Communicative Technology during COVID-19.](#)

November 6, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter.

November 9, 2020: There are 54 positive staff and 49 positive residents at GRC. There are 16 positive staff and 17 positive residents at WRC.

November 17-18, 2020: Iowa Medicaid and the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) hosted a virtual provider training event and answered questions.

November 20, 2020: Iowa Medicaid hosted a provider conference call to answer questions.

December 1, 2020: There are 6 positive staff and 17 positive residents at IMHI.

December 2, 2020: Iowa Medicaid announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the Medicaid e-News stakeholder newsletter. Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Grants for ICF/ID, SNF, NF, NF-MI, and PMIC providers](#).

December 7, 2020: DHS is sad to announce a resident at one of DHS' six facilities has passed away resulting from COVID-19 complications. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of the deceased. This is the first resident of a DHS facility to pass away due to complications from COVID-19. The safety and well-being of those we serve is our highest priority, and we will continue to do everything we can to protect the residents and staff at all of our facilities. *The date noted is the date of public reporting. DHS will not be reporting the location or day of the death to protect the identity of the clients served and respect the wishes of grieving families.

December 14, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts to the Hawki Board.

December 21, 2020: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on our COVID-19 efforts to the Health Policy Oversight Committee.

January 7, 2021: DHS is sad to announce a resident at one of DHS' six facilities has passed away resulting from COVID-19 complications. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of the deceased. This is the **second** resident of a DHS facility to pass away due to complications from COVID-19. The safety and well-being of those we serve is our highest priority, and we will continue to do everything we can to protect the residents and staff at all our facilities. *The date noted is the date of public reporting. DHS will not be reporting the location or day of the death to protect the identity of the clients served and respect the wishes of grieving families.

January 8, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding COVID-19 Vaccines and Monoclonal Antibodies](#).

January 25, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding the CARES Act Spending Deadline Extended Through June 30, 2021](#).

January 29, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding additional billing questions for COVID-19 vaccines](#).

January 29, 2021: DHS is sad to announce a resident at one of DHS' six facilities has passed away resulting from COVID-19 complications. Our hearts go out to the family and friends of the deceased. This is the **third** resident of a DHS facility to pass away due to complications from COVID-19. The safety and well-being of those we serve is our highest priority, and we will continue to do everything we can to protect the residents and staff at all our facilities. *The date noted is the date of public reporting. DHS will not be reporting the location or day of the death to protect the identity of the clients served and respect the wishes of grieving families.

February 2021: Iowa received 94.8 million in funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA).

Assistance included:

- A contract for \$7 million dollars was signed with Iowa AEYC to support the WAGE\$ program statewide.
- The Department partnered with Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and awarded \$11.8 million to supplement Child Care Challenge Fund applicants.
- \$12 million was used for the Invest in Iowa Child Care (IICC) program.
- \$61.6 million was used to provide monthly stipends to child care facilities .
- \$2.4 million was used for co-pay reimbursements to CCA families.

February 8, 2021: Iowa Medicaid submitted a Disaster SPA for payment of the COVID-19 vaccine administration as the Medicare rate.

February 24, 2021: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on COVID-19 efforts at the MAAC meeting

February 25, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Monoclonal Antibodies Information](#).

March 2021: The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 was enacted, including provisions to establish and fund the Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund (PEAF) under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act. After specified set-asides, this Fund makes just over \$923M available to states through allotments based on a 2-part formula. Iowa's allotment amount is \$6,333,889. There is no state match or other expenditure requirement. States were required to apply for their share of funds no later than April 25, 2021. Funds must be used for non-recurring, short-term benefits to help needy families affected by the COVID pandemic, with up to 15% allowed for administrative costs. States must spend funds by September 30, 2022, with any unspent funds being redistributed after that date to states that fully spent their allotted amount. Funds cannot be used to supplant other federal, state, or local funds.

March 15, 2021: Iowa Medicaid was granted an extension for its HCBS Appendix K waiver.

March 15, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Asynchronous Teledentistry \(D9996\)](#).

March 26, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding COVID-19 Vaccines](#).

April 2021: DHS applied for and was awarded its share of PEAFF funds = \$6.3M.

April-June 2021: DHS identified and considered options for using PEAFF funds, eventually electing to use a multi-prong approach by using funds:

- To extend the state's Double-Up Food Buck (DUFEB) program by providing funds to replace the federal grant funds for the program once these funds were exhausted.
- To provide non-food items for families, such as diapers, at designated food banks and pantries.
- To distribute funds through an existing network of entities, referred to as "brokers", already receiving TANF funds from the department. These brokers use PEAFF funds to provide non-recurring short-term benefits through vendor payments for goods or services rather than direct cash payments to the family.

April 12, 2021: Iowa Medicaid publicly presented information on COVID-19 efforts at the Hawki Board meeting.

April 20, 2021: DHS resumed some of the Medicaid eligibility processes for many members currently enrolled in Medicaid and Hawki. This rollout is the first of five phases of resuming back to normal operations. DHS will continue resuming the rest of the processes in future months. Many of the regular processes had been put on hold for more than a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

April 23, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Unwinding COVID-19 Medical Assistance Eligibility](#), and announced program updates related to COVID-19 in the [Medicaid e-News](#) stakeholder newsletter.

April 26, 2021: Iowa Medicaid submitted a third Appendix K request and a new Disaster SPA to modify its provider re-certification and Emergency Needs Assessment (ENA) processes for HCBS and habilitation.

April 27, 2021: DHS announced the Investing in Iowa's Child Care Program, a funding program to increase availability of child care throughout the state through start-up, expansion, and urgent regulatory funding.

April 29, 2021: Iowa Medicaid published an [IL regarding Monoclonal Antibodies Update](#).

April 29, 2021: Discontinued mandatory quarantine requirements for new admissions to Mental Health Institutes in lieu of mandatory pre- and post-admission COVID-19 testing (throughout the incubation period). Enacted requirements for mass testing and admission suspension at facilities in connection to county positivity rates.

April 30, 2021: Iowa Medicaid received approval of its Disaster SPA for payment of the COVID-19 vaccine administration at the Medicare rate.

May – August 2021: DHS continues to issue the maximum amount allowable to eligible SNAP households.

May 12, 2021: DHS announces the distribution plan for school year 20-21 P-EBT benefits.

June 2021: Distributed Covid pandemic resource information to CPPCs to share out with local community networks including:

- Covid Recovery Iowa grant extension
- Pandemic Relief for Iowa Foster Youth and Alumni
- Pandemic Food Assistance (P-EBT) Distribution Plan for Children Under 6
- Information regarding key resources for housing financial assistance programs such Rental Assistance Finder, Emergency Rental Assistance Program, Emergency Housing Vouchers and LIHEAP

June 2021: DHS signed agreements with DUFEB, 6 Food Banks & Pantries, and 11 brokers consisting of 10 Family Centered Services (FCS) contractors and the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) program, to disburse PEAFF funds to needy families. The agreements have an effective date of July 1, 2021.

June-August 2021: Amid an increase in positive COVID cases related to the Delta variant, DHS continues to allow residential settings working with their local public health agencies to “quarantine” and place a hold on new admits when youth on campus test positive.

June-August 2021: Through an exception to policy, continued to serve 13 youth in foster care who would have otherwise aged out of foster care without a suitable plan.

June 1, 2021: DHS reimposes work participation requirements for Family Investment Program recipients.

June 1, 2021: Returned to in-person contacts in the Parent Partner, RRTS, and FCS programs while continuing to allow for virtual visits due to COVID related concerns on a case by case basis.

June 23, 2021: Received approval from FNS for a waiver of SNAP QC Face-to-face interviews for July 2021 – Dec 2021. Face to face interviews will be replaced by telephone or video interviews for this time period.

July 2021: To address workforce concerns in residential settings, DHS instituted an ETP process to allow for new staff to start after initial background checks, but prior to receiving federal fingerprint results in shelter, QRTP, and clustered site SAL.

July 2021: The Iowa Aftercare Services Network mailed more than 5,000 postcards to former foster youth to increase awareness of pandemic relief available to them.

July 2021: Expenditure of PEAFF funds began in July 2021, will continue throughout SFY22, and end no later than September 30, 2022.

July-August 2021: Provided 45 Foster Fund payments for children in foster care to attend camp, purchase pool passes, buy games and books, and for other activities intended to increase social and developmental opportunities.

July 1, 2021: DHS increased the cap for Foster Fund payments from \$300.00 per applicant to \$600.00 per applicant. Foster Fund payments are utilized for children in foster care to

attend camp, purchase pool passes, buy games and books, and for other activities intended to increase social and developmental opportunities.

July 1, 2021: DHS expands WAGE\$ contract for salary supplements for eligible early childhood providers in an effort to help sustain the workforce and access to child care.

July 15, 2021: DHS announces the P-EBT distribution plan for children under 6 who receive SNAP benefits.

July 16, 2021: Distributed hazard pay to facility (and front-line field) staff for work during the public health emergency as follows:

- All full-time employees, excluding Superintendents, on the payroll from November 27, 2020 and remaining on the payroll through June 24, 2021 will receive a one-time hazard pay of \$500.
- All part-time and temporary employees, excluding Superintendents, on the payroll from November 27, 2020 and remaining on the payroll through June 24, 2021 will receive a one-time hazard pay of \$185.

August 2021: Contractors began submitting invoices for PEAFF expenditures.

August 1, 2021: DHS began distribution of \$100,00 of Administration for Community Living (ACL) CARES act funding to provide goods and services for Adult Protective Services (APS) clients to address needs resulting from the pandemic for the period of August 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

August 11, 2021: DHS announces the P-EBT summer distribution plan. Eligibility for Summer P-EBT includes students who were eligible for receive free or reduced-price meals in school year 20-21 and for children under 6 who received SNAP during the summer.

August 23: As of the end of August, DHS and the Iowa Aftercare Services Network made Pandemic Relief Payments to over 1200 young adults, who have aged out of foster care, to help them afford food, housing, and transportation.