



Department of  
**HUMAN SERVICES**

***FFY 2020-2024 Child and Family  
Services Plan  
Disaster Plan***

**June 2020**

# **Title IV-B Child and Family Services Plan Federal Fiscal Years 2020-2024 Disaster Plan**

State of Iowa  
Iowa Department of Human Services  
Division of Adult, Children and Family Services

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## **Introduction to the Department's Child Welfare Disaster Plan**

The state of Iowa uses a Continuity of Operations (COOP) and Continuity of Government (COG) plan; re-written across state government in 2013, updated in 2014, and overhauled in 2017. This overhaul initiated new safety measures in state government buildings.

The Iowa Department of Human Services' (DHS or department) COOP and COG planning is a part of the state's government implementation plan that allows the DHS to maintain an ability to continue services for persons under its care who are displaced or adversely affected by a natural or man-made disaster. Descriptions of the procedures and actions taken by the DHS Division of Adult, Children and Family Services (referred to as Division or ACFS, and working along with other DHS Divisions or state departments) in response to a crisis are in the COOP/COG Plan.

## **Changes to previous child welfare plans**

This plan for federal fiscal years (FFY) 2020 – 2024 is not significantly different than recent years' updated versions. However, DHS, as part of its update, included information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since June 2019, many weather related events affected Iowa. Eleven (11) Governor-declared disaster proclamations for multiple counties in the state occurred due to extremely wet and stormy weather that resulted in damaging winds, heavy rains, thunderstorms, tornadoes, flash flooding, and long term flooding, with significant damage to public and private property. There was also concerns over a timely harvest that necessitated a proclamation of disaster emergency allowing oversize and overweight divisible loads under certain circumstances.

Yet, the operations of both the state offices (and its local affiliates) and its private contractors throughout Iowa were not affected to the extent of isolation from help or inability to operate. Entities experiencing predicaments successfully continued programs, used alternative methods of communication, or temporarily relocated children or adults in care, depending on the situation and the need at that time.

In 2020, the most significant disaster that occurred is the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 14 Governor-declared public health emergency declarations have occurred at the writing of this report. Beginning in early March 2020, ACFS began implementing new protocols, tracking systems, and guidance documents to stay aligned with the CDC and the governor's recommendations. DHS, in close consultation with Iowa Department of Public Health, public and private partners here in Iowa, and our Federal partners, created decision trees and communication plans. DHS shared robust protocol change documents and updates in order to ensure staff and contractors were aware of the fluid changes occurring in accordance with direction from the state and federal level.

As of the date of the writing of this report, Iowa has had approximately 75 children in foster care test positive for COVID-19. This data includes children placed in family foster

care, shelter care, group care, and supervised apartment living. In the congregate care settings, contractors have been able to quarantine youth on campus and care for them in their current setting, without the need for any youth in Iowa having a placement disruption. In family foster care, only five foster families have displaced youth due to COVID risks and/or discomfort with visitation. There is no data at this time regarding any group care, shelter care, supervised apartment living providers, or foster families who have stopped providing care due to COVID-19. CARES funding has been utilized in Iowa to support foster parents and other providers dealing with the impact of COVID-19 in such ways as increased monetary support for staffing needs in congregate care settings, and stipends for foster parents caring for COVID-19 positive youth.

Below is an excerpt<sup>1</sup> from the DHS website that provides an overview of DHS' management of COVID-19:

DHS created a link on the DHS website to house all information and guidance in one spot for consumers and staff, with regular updates occurring when new information is available. This website states: "The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) has taken significant steps to ensure the safety and well-being of our team and those we serve during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the State adjusts and tailors its approach to the crisis, DHS will continue its robust mitigation efforts while ensuring continued access to services.

The guidance and protocols DHS put in place will continue. This is true for the guidance provided to our community partners, and this is true for our operations. This means field offices throughout the state will continue to serve Iowans by appointment only and much of DHS' office staff will continue to work from home. Facilities will continue health screenings, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other enhanced mitigation practices.

Video and phone based family interactions will continue. We will also continue to accommodate in-person family interactions on a case-by-case basis, which will take into account the availability of PPE and the most current guidance from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), among other considerations.

DHS intends to deploy a consistent approach to our statewide operations to ensure clarity for our team members as well as all of our partners, and to account for the complexity of our work across counties, regions and service areas."

This website allows all COVID-19 DHS resources to be stored in one spot. These resources include several guidance sections. The first is for Clients and Providers, covering topics including child care, child abuse prevention, child support, Iowa

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<sup>1</sup> The website page is <https://dhs.iowa.gov/COVID19>.

Medicaid, food security, foster care, mental health, and volunteering. The second section is for DHS Team Members, including a supervisor toolkit, and information about masks and PPE. A sub-section of the DHS Team Members portion is where all the information resides for DHS social workers and contractors, including guidance documents for congregate care settings, foster parents, home visits, parent partners, drug testing, dependent adult services, child abuse assessments, supervised apartment living (SAL), and Aftercare. Another sub-section houses External Resources, including information from the Iowa judicial branch, fraud scam alerts, and other topics related to managing during COVID-19. The final sub-section contains information regarding the Employee Assistance Program for State employees who may be struggling during this stressful time.

The continuing emergence of new or improvements to existing technologies eased efforts required to respond to these occurrences. The availability of cell phones, email, and video conferencing at our fingertips plays an increasingly important role in instant communications.

It is the intent of DHS to continue with the plan and its role in the statewide COG plan while assessing its applicability each year. An annual review of this plan will occur, with updates made as needed.

### **The DHS Child Welfare Disaster Plan**

This section includes child welfare planning information for the Iowa COOP/COG Plan and descriptions of supplemental procedures that relate to the federal requirements for disaster planning. These procedures describe how Iowa would:

- Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel displaced because of a disaster;
- Preserve essential program records; and
- Coordinate services and share information with other states.

Operationally, the COOP/COG Plan focuses on the following: emergency authority in accordance with applicable law; safekeeping of vital resources, facilities and records; and, establishment of emergency operating capacity. It also follows executive and legal directives under Iowa law. Additionally, the Division developed supplemental procedures related to communications with local, state, and federal entities.

Iowa Code, Chapter 29C.5 and 29C.8 both require comprehensive evacuation planning. In addition, the Iowa Severe Weather and Emergency Evacuation Policy, adopted December 2001, states: *"It is the Governor's philosophy that there must be plans to ensure that State Government can operate under exceptional circumstances. Therefore, Executive branch departments must deploy plans to ensure staffing and*

*provisions of essential services to the public during severe weather or emergency closings.”<sup>2</sup>*

The Foster Care and Protection of Adults and Children sections of the COOP/COG Plan concentrate on individuals and families who receive services provided by the DHS and provide guidelines for foster care providers to develop emergency procedures responsive to accidents or illness, fire, medical and water emergencies, natural disasters, acts of terror and other life threatening situations for children in out-of-home care. Since state fiscal year (SFY) 2012, contracts for foster group care and child welfare emergency services have required contractors to collaborate with the DHS and implement written plans for disasters and emergency situations, including training plans for staff and volunteers. These contractor plans focus on: situations involving intruders or intoxicated persons; evacuations; fire; tornado, flood, blizzard, or other weather incidents; power failures; bomb threats; chemical spills; earthquakes; events involving nuclear materials; or, other natural or man-made disasters. Contracted providers created and implemented written plans for the COVID-19 disaster in early 2020.

### **Disaster Communications with Federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Partners**

If a natural or man-made disaster in Iowa affects the clients of the DHS or inhibits the ability of the DHS to provide services, the following communication steps shall be followed.

- The Director of the Iowa Department of Human Services or the Director's designee(s), the Administrator of the Division of Adult, Children and Family Services, or the Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services shall call Kendall Darling, Region VII Program Manager in the DHHS Regional Office, at his office (816) 426-2262 or other at the cell phone number (202) 868-9753, at the earliest possible opportunity.
- If there is no response from the Regional Office, the Director or designee shall call Joe Bock, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Children's Bureau, at (202) 205-8618.
- The content of the call shall be a summary of the situation and a request for any assistance that may be necessary or appropriate.

### **Disaster Communications with Other State and National Organizations**

If Iowa is affected by a natural or man-made disaster that affects the clients of the DHS or inhibits the ability of the DHS to provide services, the following communication steps shall be followed related to notification of other states and national groups.

- The Director of the Iowa Department of Human Services or the Director's designee(s), the Administrator of the Division of Adult, Children and Family Services, or the Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services shall call the

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<sup>2</sup> State of Iowa Continuity of Operations (COOP) & Continuity of Government (COG) Implementation Plan, page 2 (Approved July 30, 2013)

administrative office of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) at (202) 682-0100 and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) at (703) 412-2400.

- The content of the calls shall be a summary of the situation and a request for any assistance that may be necessary or appropriate.

**The information below is referred to in the COOP/COG plan and the following table:**

- Kelly Garcia, Director, Iowa Department of Human Services, (515) 281-5452
- Matt Highland, Chief Information Officer, (515) 281-4848
- Laverne Armstrong, Administrator of the Division of Field Operations, (515) 281-8746
- Steven Campagna, Chief of the Bureau of Enterprise Systems and Technology, (515) 281-6894
- The Division or Bureau Policy Team:
  1. Janee Harvey, Administrator of the Division of Adult, Children and Family Services, (515) 281-6802
  2. Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services - Vacant
  3. Julie Allison, Chief of the Bureau of Child Care Services, (515) 281-6177
- Central Abuse Hotline, (800) 362-2178

**State Procedures Related To Identified Federal Requirements**

The actions reported in the following table are from Iowa's COOP/COG Plan or are supplemental to the plan, and they identify the personnel, equipment, vital records and databases, and facility and infrastructure needed for each action. These actions encompass the four federal requirements identified at the beginning of this section.

**Table 1: State Procedures**

<b>Essential Functions</b>	<b>Personnel/Special Skills</b>	<b>Application(s) Necessary for Function</b>	<b>Other Processes &amp; Interfaces Needed</b>	<b>Essential Communication Needed</b>	<b>Customers /Vendors</b>	<b>Documents/Vital Records Needed</b>
<b>Foster Care</b>						
1 Communicate with foster care providers regarding status and assistance needs and any initial instructions; Determine if there is an initial need to relocate clients through the Deputy Director.	Division/ Bureau Policy Team	Foster Care Database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	DHS field staff, Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare services contractors, Dept. of Inspections and Appeals	Employees manual, foster care licensing information
2 Determine potential relocation sites (other institutions or foster care homes) to use if needed and offer assistance with placement and transportation logistics if needed.	Division Policy Team/ Institution/foster care providers (DHS Field Office responsibility)	Foster Care Database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	DHS field staff, Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare services contractors, Dept. of Inspections and Appeals	Employees manual, foster care licensing information
3 Contact IT to transfer the Central Abuse Hotline to the alternate location	Administrator of the Division of Field Operations	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual



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4 Support staff and providers by making policy clarification available through the Central Abuse Hotline Help Desk.	Bureau Policy Team	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
5 Coordinate responses to staffing needs for abuse allegations identified through the Central Abuse Hotline; Coordinate with the Division of Field Operations for response. Respond to abuse allegations; assign local staff to respond to local site	Administrator of the Division of Field Operations, IT Manager	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
6 Coordinate staffing and assign as necessary to back-up inoperable service areas to respond to foster care providers' needs.	IT Liaison, Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster Care Database	Mainframe	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	Division of ACFS	Employees manual

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7 Ensure care provider payment system continues by contacting IT and transferring system to alternate location (ensure client/server JARVIS database and mainframe FACS application are operational); Implement paper back-up payment system if necessary.	Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster Care Database, FACS and/or JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	Division of Data Management	Employees manual
8 Provide staffing to back-up inoperable service areas to respond to foster care providers' needs.	Chief of the Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster care database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet	DHS field staff, Juvenile Court Officers, child welfare services contractors	Employees manual

Essential Functions	Personnel/Special Skills	Application(s) Necessary for Function	Other Processes & Interfaces Needed	Essential Communication Needed	Customers /Vendors	Documents/Vital Records Needed
<b>Protection of Children and Adults</b>						
1 Determine status of group homes or institutions in affected area; Assess the affected area and determine the nearest institution that's able to accept persons if needed.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services	Foster care database		Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
2 Coordinate with CWIS team and ICN to ensure the Abuse Hotline Phone Number is transferred to alternate location site; Provide staffing to receive abuse allegations. Forward reports to the specific area where abuse may have occurred. If no local phone lines, phone assessment will be completed by policy division.	Division of Field Operations	JARVIS database		Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual

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3 Contact CWIS team to ensure foster care payroll system continues to issue monthly payment checks to care providers; if not available, implement paper issuance system using the most recent database backup.	Division or Bureau Policy Team, Chief Information Officer	Foster care database/Main frame, payroll list, JARVIS database	Mainframe	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
4 Organize and provide emergency responders to respond to providers requesting assistance or policy clarification.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services and Field Operations Offices	Foster care database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
5 Ensure access to the Central Abuse Registry and MIS systems are available (JARVIS); Determine need to modify current policies regarding child abuse allegation response times.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services and Division of Field Operations, Chief Information Officer	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline, Servers, Mainframe	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual

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6 Provide staffing to respond to abuse allegations; Assess the availability of field staff to conduct abuse assessments and make staff re-assignments as needed.	Bureau of Child Welfare and Community Services and Division of Field Operations	JARVIS database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual
7 Assist new placement of children and provide transportation if required	Division or Bureau Policy Teams/ Division of Field Operations	Foster Care database	Central Abuse Hotline	Telephone, Cell Phone, Email, Internet, Intranet		Employees manual