

2021

ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS





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**You are the bows from which your children
as living arrows are sent forth.**

**The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,
and He bends you with His might
that His arrows may go swift and far.**

**Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,
so He loves also the bow that is stable. ”**

– KAHIL GIBRAN

One of the questions we ask ourselves on the ECI State Board is “Why am I here ... what is it that drives my work on behalf of Iowa’s children aged 0-5?” As the ECI State Board Chair, the quote from Kahil Gibran above sums up my response. It reminds me that while we all want the best for our children, the trajectory of their course into and through adulthood depends so much on how we set their course from the very beginning. The stable bow not only represents the child’s parents but also the community and state and federal government in their roles in establishing support for parents and guardians as archers.

The 2021 Iowa Legislative Session provided significant discussion on the economic impact of inadequate child care services. In the last 10 years, Iowa has seen a 56% drop in the number of child care programs and a 6% drop in the number of child care spaces. As noted from the [Governor’s Child Care Task Force report](#), Iowa’s child care crisis’ economic impact results in an approximate loss of \$935 million dollars annually as a result of a lack of child care. To develop a comprehensive approach to address remedies, Early Childhood Iowa will be incorporating the intent of the Task Force’s recommendations in our strategic planning.

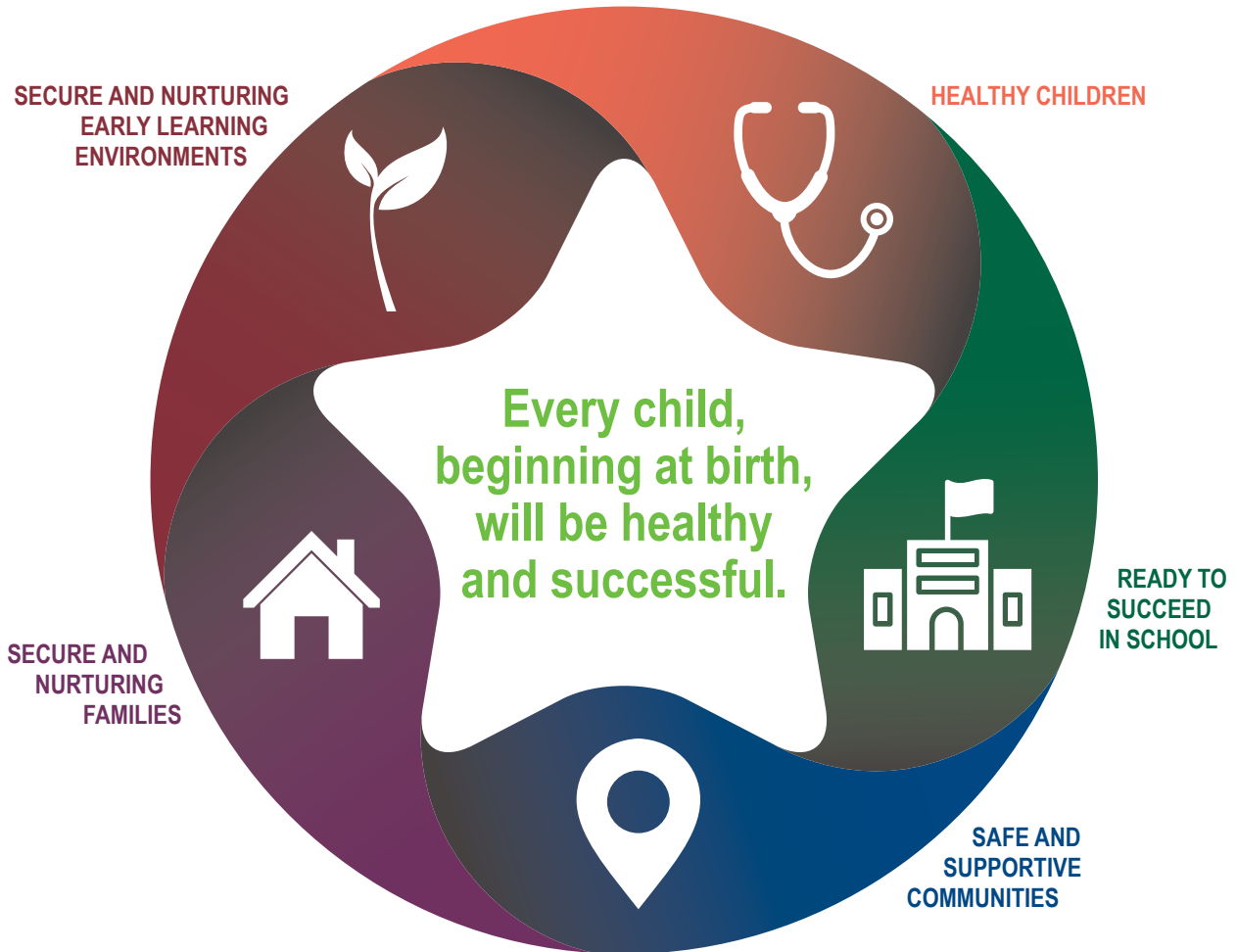
We continue to hear from our Area ECI boards about the need to address adequate funding for early child care professionals. Child care professionals in Iowa make an average of \$10.18 an hour or \$21,170 per year ([Child Care Task Force](#)). This is the lowest among surrounding Midwest states and lower than the national median pay of \$25,460 per year. Most programs are unable to pay benefits. We understand the Governor’s position that there must be balance between a parents cost for child care and wages paid but we agree with the Task Force’s finding that this must be addressed. The Governor’s support for expanded scholarship opportunities for early childcare professionals through T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood® IOWA and Child Care WAGES® IOWA is a beginning.

The state of early child care in Iowa is good ... not great, but improving. The ECI Board continues to find efficiencies through grant funding, public-private partnerships, and pursuing integrated data management ([I2D2](#)). We are working with our ECI Area Boards and collaborators to strengthen our support for Iowa’s most precious resource and future workforce. We stand ready with the Governor and the Iowa Legislative Assembly to make Iowa’s early childhood system the gateway to future economic growth and prosperity.

Respectfully,

Rich Clewell, ECI State Board Chair

OUR VISION FOR IOWA'S CHILDREN



EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA IS IOWA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) was recognized by Iowans through initial legislation in 1998 to create a partnership between communities and state government with an emphasis to improve the well-being of young children and their families. For twenty-three years and counting, Iowa has strengthened these partnerships so that every community in Iowa will develop the capacity and commitment for using local, informed decision-making to achieve desired results for our youngest Iowans.

* For a full data report to see how Iowa is doing, check out the Statewide Indicators report: earlychildhood.iowa.gov/annual-reports

Iowa's early childhood system collaborates to ensure children are **HEALTHY**



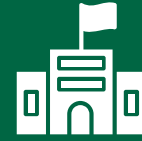
Child Care Nurse Consultants (CCNC) incorporate principles of health equity when working with early childhood care and education programs; providing consultation, training, technical assistance, information and referral as well as care planning for children with special health needs. The CCNC program is evidence-based and helps to ensure that children have access to healthy and safe care.

2,153 child care programs received Child Care Nurse Consultant Services (CCNC) with 95% improving in health and safety

458 children with special health needs were identified, 96% had a care plan established to address their needs

13,807 technical assistance to child care programs was provided (up 51% from FY20 due to needed pandemic support)

Iowa's early childhood system extended children's opportunity to be **READY TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL**



1,873 families received early literacy support and developmentally appropriate books for their children, ages 0-5, from local area boards financially partnering with their local libraries and literacy initiatives

359 children received safe and reliable transportation to their early learning program who otherwise would not had access to early childhood programming

Iowa's early childhood system partners to support **SECURE AND NURTURING FAMILIES**



Out of 7,319 families enrolled in a state-funded family support program:

34.1% enrolled prenatally

63% of families had incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (i.e. for a family of three in 2021 that is \$27,450/year or \$13.50 per hour at 40 hours per week)

93% of families improved or maintained healthy functioning, problem-solving, and communication

17% of children screened for developmental delays were referred for additional services via early intervention

Iowa's early childhood system supports **SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES**



Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) exists so that every community in Iowa will develop the capacity and commitment for using local, informed decision making to achieve desired results for Iowa's young children and their families.

235,696+ children ages birth through age five need every community's dedication to their first 2,000 days (2020, Woods and Poole Population Estimate)

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS*:

Include home visiting programs or group-based parent education that are designed to strengthen protective factors, including parenting skills, **increasing parental knowledge of child development**, increasing family functioning and problem solving skills

May be used as an early intervention strategy to **improve birth outcomes**, parental knowledge, **increase economic self-sufficiency**, the home learning environment, family and child involvement with others, and **service coordination and resource referrals**

May have a specific focus on **preventing child maltreatment or ensuring children are safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school**

** Models (delivered by Nationally Credentialed Family Support Professionals): Healthy Families America (HOPES-HFI), Home-based Early Head Start, Family Connects, Nurse Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and locally developed models*

Iowa's early childhood system prompts and funds **SECURE AND NURTURING EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

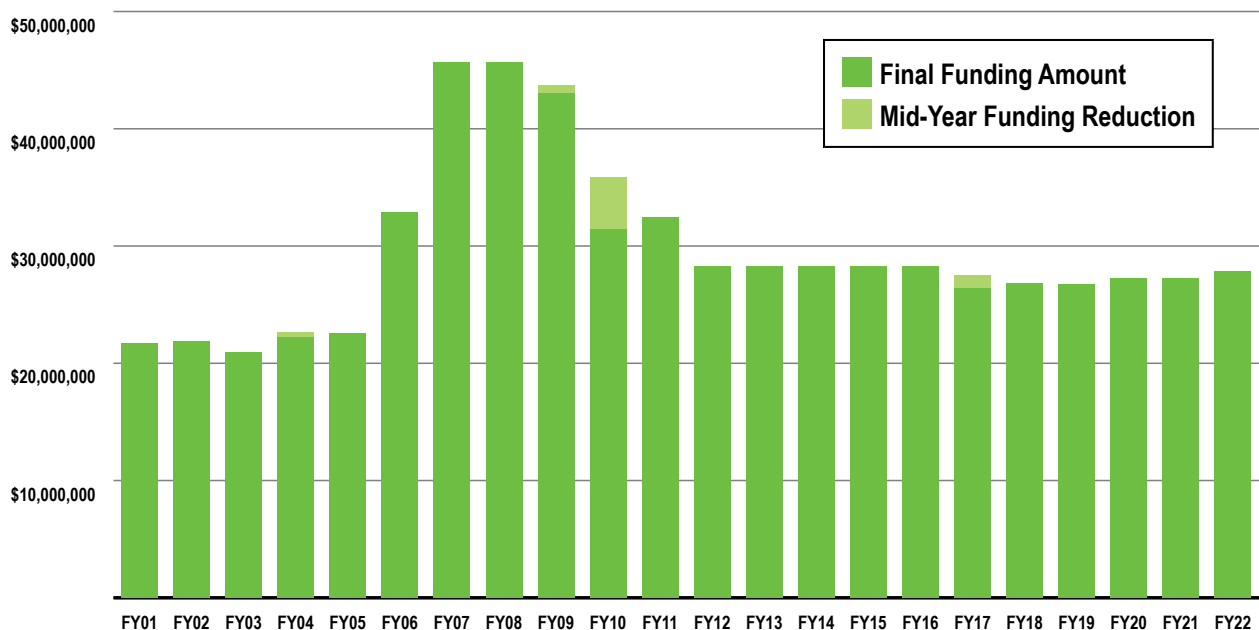


\$524,862.85 invested to provide start-up, expansion, business education, or quality improvement activity grants to child care businesses

EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA'S ACHIEVEMENTS



ECI FUNDING HISTORY



'SFY'99 - 29 counties funded
 SFY'00 - 98 counties funded
 SFY'01 - 99 counties funded
 SFY'04 - 2.5% mid-year across the board reduction in School Ready funding; .25% funding restored before the end of the fiscal year (adjusted decrease in funding of \$294,305.50)
 SFY'09 - 1.5% mid-year across the board reduction in School Ready funding (decrease in funding of \$524,135.60)
 SFY'10 - \$500,000 mid-year reduction in Early Childhood funding; 10% mid-year reduction in School Ready funding (decrease in funding of \$3,015,369)
 SFY'11 - At the close of the 2010 legislative session, SF2366 signed into law making appropriations to backfill SFY'10 School Ready Preschool funding
 SFY'15 - Early Childhood funds - DHS reduced the amount withheld from the appropriation for the TA team member
 SFY'17 - 3.75% mid-year across the board reduction in School Ready funding (decrease in funding of \$824,994)



ECI HIGHLIGHT

I-SMILE™

The I-Smile™ dental home initiative connects Iowa children and families with dental, medical, and community resources to ensure a lifetime of health and wellness. Good oral health allows children the ability to eat well, grow and thrive, concentrate on learning, feel positive about their appearance, and improve social interactions, thus contributing to overall well-being and reducing future dental and medical costs.

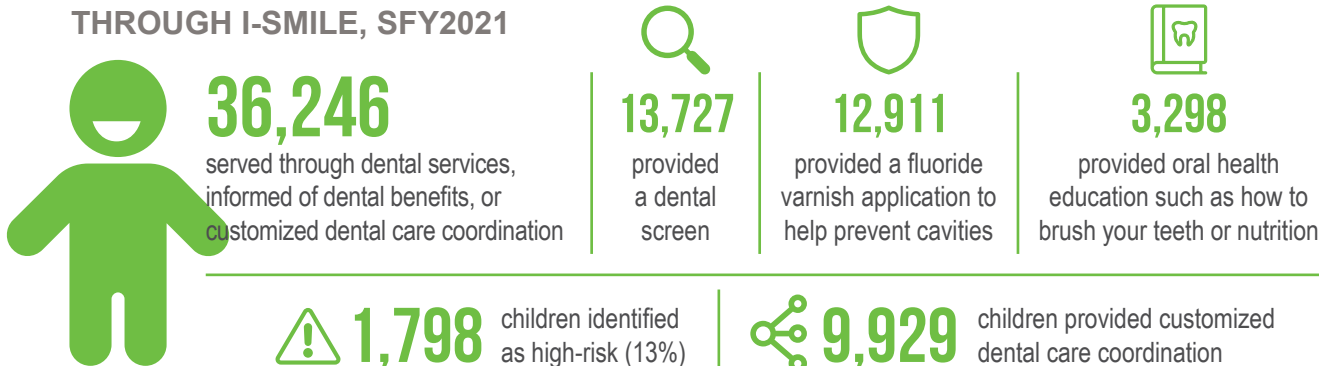
I-Smile™ began in 2006. In partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Services, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) administers I-Smile™ through contracts with regional public and private non-profit organizations. These contractors implement I-Smile™ statewide in all 99 counties. Each of the contractors employ a dental hygienist, who serves as the local I-Smile™ Coordinator. The 23 I-Smile™ Coordinators focus on preventing dental disease, identifying ways to help families address challenges so that

all underserved children may receive care from dentists, and promoting the importance of oral health within their communities through:

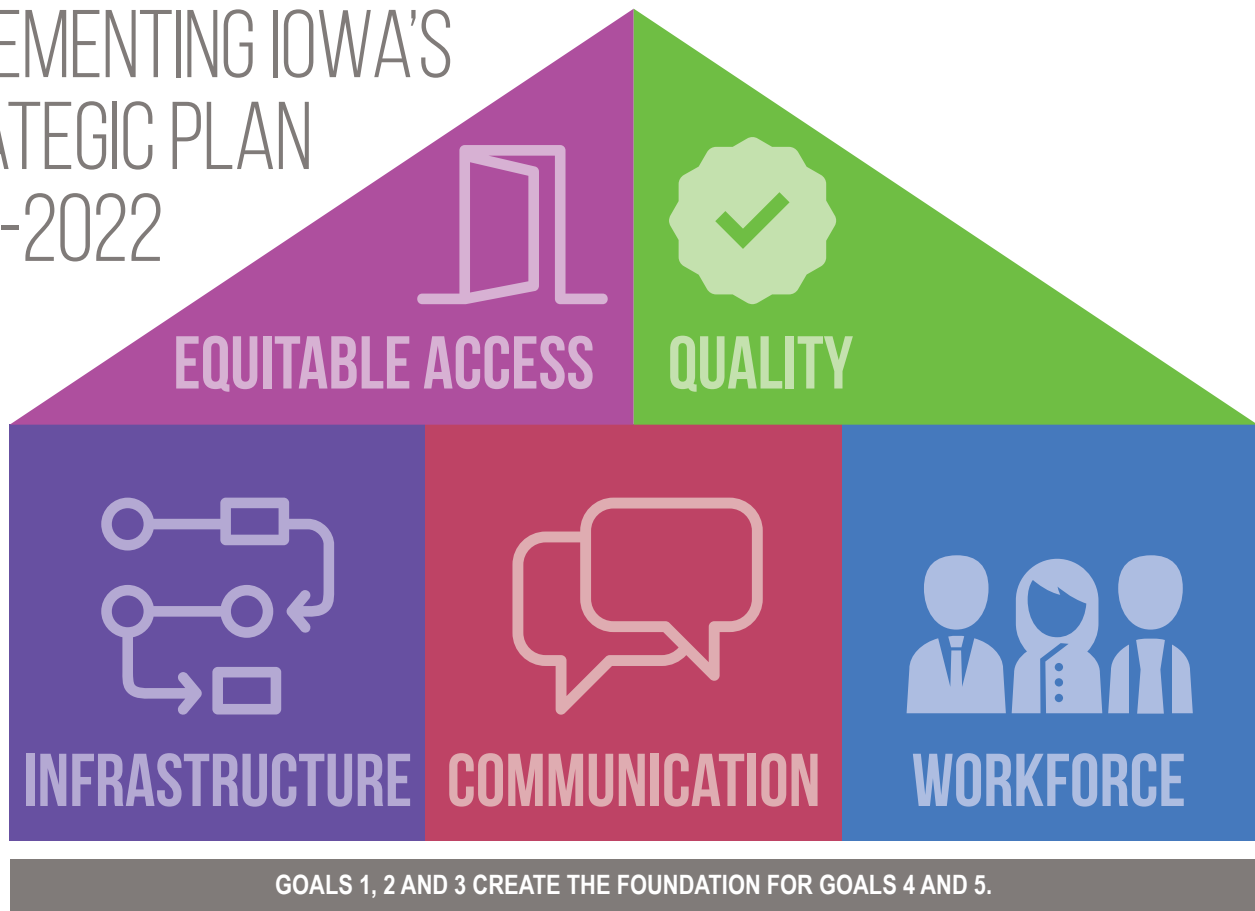
- Developing relationships with dental offices to increase availability of appointments for children;
- Assisting families with scheduling dental appointments and linking to needed community resources;
- Building partnerships with businesses, organizations, and schools to increase oral health awareness;
- Participating in community events and meetings, incorporating oral health within health and social initiatives;
- Addressing oral health issues of county residents through partnership with local boards of health;
- Training medical office staff to provide oral screenings and fluoride applications for children at well-child visits;
- Educating parents, children, and the public about oral health and preventing cavities; and
- Assuring that children have access to preventive care such as oral screenings and fluoride applications.

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in substantially fewer opportunities for the I-Smile™ program to provide gap-filling preventive dental care, such as fluoride applications and screenings, for children at risk for dental disease. Additionally, I-Smile™ Coordinators are training medical providers who serve children ages 0-2 on how to provide oral screens and fluoride varnish to help prevent cavities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic where access to care is limited. More than 1,700 children were provided a fluoride varnish at their medical office in 2021, an increase of more than 600 kids from the previous year! Learn more about I-Smile™ at ismile.idph.iowa.gov.

CHILDREN SERVED THROUGH I-SMILE, SFY2021



IMPLEMENTING IOWA'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022



FY21 STRATEGIC PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

To promote the vision for a comprehensive early care, education, health, and human services, the Early Childhood Iowa initiative empowers individuals, communities, and state level partners to achieve the desired results via a statewide strategic plan. The desired results will be achieved as private and public entities work collaboratively. The role of the Early Childhood Iowa State board, 38 area boards, and other state and local government agencies is to provide support, leadership, and facilitation of the growth of individual, community, and state responsibility in addressing the strategic plan.



GOAL 1

Promote a coordinated infrastructure to advance the early childhood system.

ECI Results Accountability and Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision-Making (I2D2) partnered to identify statewide indicators for the early childhood system to highlight and publish via an early childhood data dashboard. Throughout the year, ideas were generated across several stakeholder audiences with anticipation for an early childhood data dashboard to be released in 2022.

Virtual connections expanded statewide opportunities for stakeholder engagement. The ECI Stakeholders Alliance meets quarterly with 60+ stakeholders in virtual attendance to learn about Iowa's early childhood system.

The infrastructure for a local area community of practice cohort was established to support local areas in community planning and community partner engagement via virtual connections and tailored strategies to support local decision-making.



GOAL 2

Build public will for investing in young children and families.

ECI along with leaders within the Iowa Department of Public Health; Iowa Department of Human Services; Prevent Child Abuse Iowa; and Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) met throughout the year to develop and coordinate the infrastructure for a Family Partnership Advisory Group to enhance family engagement across the state system.



GOAL 3

Transform the early childhood workforce through formal education, improved professionalization, increased skills and competence, and new approaches to implementing best practices.

The ECI Professional Development component group engaged 85+ stakeholders statewide to develop and adopt the Iowa Adult Education and Coaching Competencies. These competencies define the necessary knowledge and skills for adult educators and technical assistance professionals. These professionals represent a wide range of disciplines and provide support to the Iowa early childhood workforce. Technical assistance professionals adhere to varying regulations and standards within their fields; and work within multiple settings, communities, programs, agencies, and systems throughout the state.

The Iowa Adult Educator and Coaching Competencies support the Early Childhood Iowa cross-system and cross-sector professional development system - with the ultimate goal to provide high quality services to young children and their families.



GOAL 4

Ensure that young children and families receive the services they need when they need them.

There are 38 Early Childhood Iowa area boards statewide representing all 99 counties. In their role, ECI area boards develop a comprehensive community plan that includes data gathered through various assessment processes. This information assists the community in planning, funding, professional development and overall support of early childhood programming in the community.

The Governor's Child Care Task Force meetings began in spring of 2021 to gather stakeholder input to address the lack of quality, affordable, and accessible child care resources for working parents.

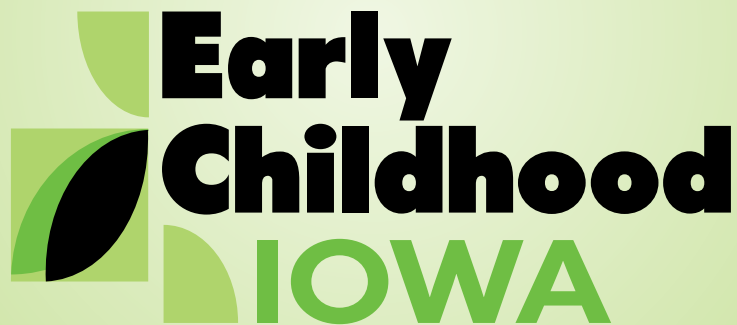


GOAL 5

Improve the quality of early childhood services for young children and their families across early care and education; health, mental health, and nutrition; and family support services.

Three local area boards collaborated with several local partners to coordinate and host the annual Southeast Iowa Regional Summit. The event includes a family event and childcare conference in Mt. Pleasant. Local family support partners assisted parents and children in making musical instruments and dance accessories out of everyday items promoting small gross motor, math, and science skills. They were able to use them to actively participate in the children's musical concert that focused on social and emotional skill development.

(DHLW Early Childhood Iowa Area, Lee/Van Buren Early Childhood Iowa Area, and Iowa, Jefferson, Keokuk Early Childhood Iowa Area (CPPC (Quad County Decategorization), Child Care Resource & Referral Region 5, 1st Five, Community Action of Southeast Iowa, Henry County ISU Extension, Iowa Wesleyan University, Lee County Health Department, and Trinity Muscatine Public Health)



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