

Iowa Community Empowerment Newsletter

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2008 State Annual Report Released

The 2008 Iowa Community Empowerment State Annual Report was released to the Iowa Legislature in January. This report is a tremendous resource for local Community Empowerment Area (CEA) Boards and early care, health and education partners across the state. It includes information and data at the state, as well as the local level.

If you've ever wondered what Community Empowerment is really all about, you are not alone. This report answers the following questions and many more:

- Who is on the Iowa Empowerment Board and what do they really do?
- I understand Empowerment has been around since 1998; what has been their yearly allocation?
- How many local Empowerment Boards are there and what is their role?
- When did my county become designated as a part of a Community Empowerment Area?
- What type of training and technical assistance has been offered this past year by Empowerment's state technical assistance team?
- What is happening in Iowa to pull together a fragmented system for early care, health and education services and programs?
- What has been happening with the funds allocated to Empowerment for state wide professional development opportunities?
- Is there an overview available of what the CEA representing my county is doing?
- Is Community Empowerment really accountable for results? The following are examples pulled from the report. Did you know that in FY2008:
 - Over 400 preschool/child care centers funded with Empowerment dollars report that they are verified or are ready for verification on Iowa's Quality Preschool Program Standards.
 - In addition to preschool scholarships, transportation to and from preschool is the most widely supported activity by the low-income preschool support funds.
 - 11,111 children ages 3-5 years were supported with low-income preschool support funds.
 - \$19,185,070.00 of Community Empowerment funds supported Healthy Families Iowa, Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start and other locally developed family support programs.
 - 36,224 children ages 0-5 or 16% of all Iowa's children ages 0-5 were served at an average cost of \$530.00 per child.
 - 86% of parents reported an increase in their parent confidence and competence in their parenting abilities.

Also in FY2008, the Iowa Empowerment Board was charged to provide to the Iowa Legislature reports regarding the Fiscal Accountability of Community Empowerment, and the status of and recommendations for Family, Friend and Neighbor Care in our state. These two reports can be found in their entirety in the annual report.

The annual report can be found on the Iowa Empowerment web site at the following link, http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/annual_reports.asp. It is arranged by section so that you can pull up those areas that are needed at the time without having to go through or print the entire report. The Office of Empowerment welcomes general comments about the report and would be interested to learn how you are able to utilize the information for strengthening local planning and efforts. Contact Shanell Wagler, Empowerment Facilitator, shanell.wagler@iowa.gov, to share your stories.

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Disclaimer:
Many articles in this newsletter are submitted by various entities. The views and opinions contained within may or may not be those of Iowa Community Empowerment.

Update December 2008 January 2009

Local Empowerment web sites are available on the state Empowerment website, www.empowerment.state.ia.us

Go to the Local Areas tab on the home page and click on Map.

To add a CEA web site link, contact the Office of Empowerment.

Early Care, Health and Education System Building Activities

- First Years First Business Summit RFP Planning meeting – Dec 1
- ECI Public Engagement committee – Dec 3
- State Child Care Advisory Council – Dec 1 & 11 & Jan 8
- QRS Oversight Committee – Dec 3 & Jan 7
- Barriers to Prenatal Care survey review – Dec 3
- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Grant TA with Dr. Schor – Dec 3
- Rebalancing Health Care Reception – Dec 3
- Rebalancing Health Care Conference – Dec 3 & 4
- T.E.A.C.H. Advisory Council meeting – Dec 4
- IFSTAN Training – Dec 4
- Fiscal Accountability Work Group (FAWG) – Dec 4
- ECCS Needs Assessment meeting, Atlanta – Dec 7-10
- ECI Congress Planning – Dec 9 & Jan 15
- Empowerment Contacts/Coordinators Quarterly TA meeting – Dec 10
- KIDS Program Peer Review, Spencer – Dec 15-16
- PAES Grant planning meeting – Dec 15
- CCNC state level discussion – Dec 15 & Jan 5
- First Years First Committee meeting – Dec 16
- Conference call with PREVENT Coach – Dec 17
- Child Care Workforce Study planning meeting – Dec 17
- AMCHP Emerging Issues Committee – Dec 17
- Help Me Grow TA application – Dec 18
- MCH Regional Conference Call – Dec 18
- Evaluation of Peer Review Process conference call – Dec 22
- Family Support Credentialing education forum, Cedar Falls – Jan 2
- ECI Co-chairs – Jan 6
- FFN conference call – Jan 6
- Family Support Professional Development Workgroup – Jan 8
- Business connection meeting with Lynn Graves – Jan 8
- Family Support TA network meeting – Jan 9
- Women's Leadership meeting presentation – Jan 14
- Iowa Empowerment Board meeting – Jan 16
- Ethics pilot training for CEA boards – Jan 21
- First Children's Finance update meeting – Jan 21
- Professional Development Steering Committee – Jan 22
- First Years First committee – Jan 22
- Iowa Business Council annual meeting – Jan 26
- Iowa Council on Youth Development steering committee – Jan 28

Site Visits/Technical Assistance Activities

- Madison County – Dec 9
- Emmet County – Dec 12
- Warren County CEA Community Meeting – Dec 19
- Corner Counties, data analysis – Dec 22
- Ringgold County board meeting – Jan 7
- Warren County recognition reception – Jan 8
- Cerro Gordo, Hancock, Worth board meeting – Jan 20
- Woodbury Early Childhood meeting – Jan 20
- Hardin County board meeting – Jan 20
- Pottawattamie County, family support evidence-based practices TA – Jan 28
- HOPES program managers meeting – Jan 29

Upcoming Events Calendar at a Glance

Early Childhood Iowa

Congress Events:

ECI Stakeholders

February 10, 2009

Airport Holiday Inn

Des Moines

www.earlychildhoodiowa.org

ECI Congress

February 11, 2009

Airport Holiday Inn

Des Moines

Early Childhood Iowa

Day on the Hill

February 12, 2009

State Capitol Building

Des Moines

Empowerment

Coordinators/Contacts Meeting

March 11, 2009

Rising Sun Church of Christ

Pleasant Hill

Iowa Empowerment Board

Meeting

March 16, 2009

Iowa Workforce Center, Des Moines

PCA Iowa Conference

April 20-21, 2009

Sheraton, West Des Moines

www.reaonline.com/pcaiowa

Annual Report Reviews

- Buena Vista, Crawford, Sac – Dec 2
- Marshall County – Dec 2
- Decatur County – Dec 3
- Dallas County – Dec 4
- Jasper County – Dec 4
- Tama County – Dec 8
- Wayne County – Dec 8
- Palo Alto, Kossuth (on site) – Dec 8
- Allamakee, Clayton, Howard, Winneshiek (on site) – Dec 11
- Chickasaw, Floyd, Mitchell (on site) – Dec 11
- Ida County (on site) – Dec 12
- Taylor County – Dec 15
- Hamilton, Humboldt, Wright – Dec 15
- Des Moines, Louisa – Dec 15
- Benton County – Dec 15
- Jefferson, Keokuk – Dec 16
- Muscatine County – Dec 17
- Cedar County – Dec 17
- Washington County – Dec 18
- Calhoun, Pocahontas, Webster – Dec 23
- Bremer, Butler, Franklin, Grundy (on site) – Jan 22
- Iowa County – Jan 26
- Union County – Jan 27
- Winnebago County – Jan 29

Linkages/Outreach Activities

- FaDSS Day on the Hill – Jan 13

System Building Update



Early Childhood Iowa Congress & Day on the Hill

Early Childhood Iowa Congress: February 10-11, 2009 (Airport Holiday Inn)

Early Care, Health, & Education Day on the Hill: February 12, 2009 (State Capitol)

The Day on the Hill will be one of the most visible opportunities for advocates to make their case for investing in Iowa's young children. This year, the Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) Congress and the Early Care, Health, and Education Day on the Hill will be a combined event in February 2009. Registration materials, exhibiting information and event details can be found on the following link of the ECI Web site: http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/ECI_Congress/index.html.

In addition to this event, an ECI Stakeholders meeting will take place the afternoon of February 10th from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the Airport Holiday Inn. If you would like to attend this meeting, please contact Jenny Hodges at jhodges@idph.state.ia.us or 515-281-4926.

Advocacy Resources:

The Iowa Legislature General Assembly - www.legis.state.ia.us

Advocacy Toolkit - www.empowerment.state.ia.us/tool_kit.asp

NAEYC - www.naeyc.org/policy

Every Child Counts - www.everychildcountsiowa.org

It's About our Kids - <http://www.itsaboutourkids.org/>

Iowa Empowerment Board News

On January 16, 2009 the Iowa Empowerment Board (IEB) met at the Iowa Workforce Center in Des Moines for their regularly scheduled meeting. After the approval of past minutes and the acceptance of the meeting's agenda, Shanell Wagler provided an administrative update. As part of the report, the state annual report was presented to the Iowa Empowerment Board. Further detail regarding this report, can be found on page one of this newsletter.

2009 Site Visit and IEB Meeting Locations Chosen:

**May 7-8, 2009
Story County CEA**

**September 10-11,
2009
Clinton, Jackson CEA**

Other agenda items included the adoption of a Designation Appeal Process and continued work on finalizing the strategic plan of the IEB. The majority of the meeting consisted of the review and adoption of the designation recommendations for the 18 CEA boards that went through the redesignation process in the fall of 2008. Thirteen community empowerment areas received a full, unconditional 3-year designation. Five received a conditional one-year designation, with an opportunity to receive technical assistance and support over the next year. At the beginning of 2010, their progress will be re-evaluated by the Iowa Empowerment Board.

Finally, reviews and recommendations were considered for the five boards that received a conditional one-year designation the previous year. The Board determined that the progress and improvements three of these local boards were able to make over the past year warranted an unconditional designation for the remainder of the three year designation cycle. The other two received a one year extension on their conditional designation status. Their progress will be re-evaluated by the IEB at the beginning of 2010.

The next meeting of the Iowa Empowerment Board will be March 13, 2009 at the Iowa Workforce Center, 430 East Grand in Des Moines.

How can you be a part of this group?

Nominations Sought For Iowa Empowerment Board

Responsibilities of an IEB member can be found on the Empowerment web site, http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/Common/pdf/ieb_responsibilities.pdf



The Iowa Empowerment Board consists of sixteen citizen members, six state agency directors, and six members of the general assembly. The state Empowerment Board currently is seeking candidates for citizen members. Citizen members are appointed by Governor Chester J. Culver and confirmed by the Iowa Senate. Interested candidates must complete a gubernatorial appointment resume in addition to seeking a letter of recommendation from their local empowerment board. The gubernatorial appointment resume can be found at <http://openup.iowa.gov/boards/>.

Citizen member selections are reflective of the state's congressional districts to ensure representation from across the state. An equally important criterion is that appointments reflect the ethnic, cultural, social, and economic diversity of our state. We encourage candidates from diverse populations to apply.



Submitted by Kristi Judkins,
Business Service Representative
Iowa Workforce Development

New FMLA Regulations Released by U.S. Department of Labor

The U.S. Department of Labor published final Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) rules on Monday, November, 17, 2008. The new rules will become effective January 16, 2009. Federal officials said highlights of the revised rules include, among others:

- Military Caregiver Leave: Implements two previously announced new benefit extensions for military family benefits;
- Serious Health Condition: Retains the current six individual definitions of “serious health condition,” but clarifies when “periodic visits to a health care provider” must be made;
- Notice Obligations: Clarifies and strengthens the employer notice requirements to employees to ensure employees are informed of their FMLA rights and obligations and similarly tightens requirements for employee’s obligation to provide FMLA notice to their employers.

Additional information on the new regulations can be found at the link below:
<http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/finalrule.htm>

New IWD E-news Publication

Iowa Workforce Development introduces a new monthly e-news publication, *Iowa Workforce Monthly* that will keep you up-to-date with the important workforce issues facing our state.

As you will see, the first issue concentrates on the topic of unemployment insurance. You may sign up to receive the newsletter or follow the link to read the publication on-line.

<http://www.iowaworkforce.org/director/>

The Newborn Academy

SAVE THE DATE!

Don't miss this exciting opportunity presented through the ICN

- WHAT:** Dr. Rizwan Shah to present on *Drug Exposed Children: Developmental Effects and Effective Interventions*
- WHEN:** Tuesday March 10th at 9:00am-1:00pm
(Dr. Shah to present for approximately 3 hours, then there will be time for Q&A)
- WHO:** Early Care, Health, and Education Professionals
- WHERE:** ICN (contact Meghan Wolfe to find ICN site closest to you)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To increase participant’s knowledge of short term and long term effects of drug exposure on children’s growth and development.
2. Effective care plans and effective interventions early health and education professionals can learn that will assist them in promoting and enhancing a drug exposed child’s development.

RSVP: By March 1st to Meghan Wolfe at: 515.281.0219 or mwolfe@idph.state.ia.us

The Newborn Academy is sponsored by Community Empowerment, Iowa Department of Public Health, Child Health Specialty Clinics, and Iowa Department of Education.





Prevent Child Abuse Iowa
www.pcaiowa.org
1-800-CHILDREN

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa will be advocating at the Iowa Legislature in 2009 for the development of a statewide program to prevent the injuries and deaths of infants and young children caused by Shaken Baby Syndrome. We encourage you to partner with us in this effort by considering creative ways in which SBS prevention and information about crying can be incorporated into your daily contacts with parents and caregivers. Also, we need your help to encourage our legislators to provide funding for this important issue.

If you are interested in learning more about our efforts during the session, please contact Executive Director Steve Scott (sscott@pcaiowa.org) to be added to our legislative advocacy e-mail list. If you would like more ideas about Shaken Baby Syndrome and its prevention, please contact Amber Russell (arussell@pcaiowa.org).

Building Healthy Families **Prevent Child Abuse Iowa's 28th annual child abuse prevention conference**

Monday, April 20 & Tuesday, April 21, 2009
Sheraton West Des Moines Hotel
1800 50th St.
West Des Moines, IA

Two ways of looking at child abuse prevention include working with families to 1) stop risky behaviors that may lead to the risk of child abuse and 2) promote protective behaviors that reduce the risk of abuse and lead to positive parenting practices. Professionals working in the field of child abuse prevention are essentially "building" healthy families by providing parents with skills training, support, and access to needed resources in order to be strong, successful, and healthy. Prevent Child Abuse Iowa's 28th annual conference will feature many workshops designed to improve the skills of Iowa's family support and early childhood professionals in assisting families in becoming healthy and successful. Naomi Haines Griffith will be returning to provide the opening keynote address which defines the theme of this year's event, "Building Healthy Families."

Workshops topics this year will include: evaluating empathy, DHS centralized intake, stress management, serving parents of teens, maternal depression, hoops and fences, engaging fathers, nurturing parenting, leadership building, healthy marriages, child abuse prevention messaging, group facilitation skills, results accountability, a sexual abuse survivor's story, Iowa's 1st Five mental health initiative, working with families in poverty, positive behavior supports at home, and more.

Registration fee:

Full conference non-member: \$170

Full conference member: \$145

[Thanks to a generous sponsorship from the Office of Empowerment, PCA-America accredited HOPES sites are able to attend the conference at the membership rate.]

Registrations must be received by March 30 to qualify for the above pricing. After March 30, prices will increase. Breakfast, snacks, and lunch are provided both days.

Registration **will soon be available** online at www.regonline.com/pcaiowa. The registration brochure will also be posted on our website when it is available: www.pcaiowa.org/conference.html.

Questions? Contact

Amber Russell

arussell@pcaiowa.org

1-800-CHILDREN; 515-244-2200

Iowa
AEYC/T.E.A.C.H.
Early Childhood®
IOWA

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 (515) 331-8000
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As an Empowerment partner, you can make a difference by helping the early childhood professionals in your area become aware of all the resources available to them. If you would like a member of the Iowa AEYC or T.E.A.C.H. staff to visit with your group or speak at a conference, call Barb Merrill at (515) 331-8000 (Ext. 11)

The case for improved child care WAGES\$ for Iowa

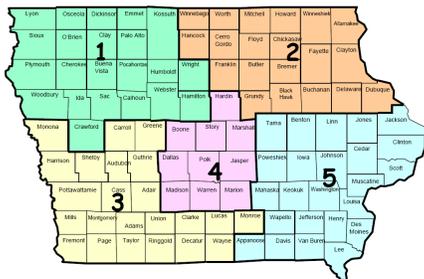
Iowa’s child care providers represent one of the lowest paid workforces in our state, but do vital work in providing high quality early care and education services for our young children, and ensuring that parents can work. Iowa’s early care and education providers support not only our current workforce, but our future workforce as well. An updated early care and education workforce study has been commissioned, with an estimated completion date of September 2009, by the Iowa Department of Education. The last study (completed in 2003) shows median hourly wage of family child care providers at \$ 5.13 and teachers in centers at \$ 7.62. Even with the increase in minimum wages since that time, teachers in child care programs who are attending college with support from T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® IOWA in 2007-08 averaged only \$ 9.20 per hour, or only \$19,136 annually. In the current child care system, the only way to improve upon these wages is usually to pass the costs along to parents accessing child care services. In today’s economy, that often puts a family in an impossible situation. In addition, quality is linked to turnover in the field, which is now estimated at over 30% annually. Increases in a provider’s education levels often encourage her/him to look for a position with a better rate of pay. Iowa’s child care and early education workforce is estimated to include between 17,000 – 20,000 providers and teachers, many who do not have formal education specializing in early childhood because of this on-going turnover.

The Child Care WAGES\$® Project was created to improve the quality of child care, through salary supplements which would be awarded in a way that reduces turnover and encourages the continued education of teachers, directors, and family child care providers. WAGES\$ links a direct, logical salary supplement for teachers (received after they complete a number of months working in a program) with the teacher’s level of education. Families experience the benefit of better educated, more consistent staff and still have the ability to afford the increased quality in care. WAGES\$ supplements reward retention in a specific job in a specific program, providing the program with increased stability and the children with caregivers who do not leave. Child Care Services Association, North Carolina, found the turnover rates of WAGES\$ participants in the three states participating in 2007-08 dropped from 30-40% to 11-16%, and 20% of the participants completed additional coursework in higher education. In addition, WAGES\$ supplements are taxable income, helping to increase the state’s tax base. Local public and foundation dollars could work together with state and federal funding to implement the salary supplements. WAGES\$ ® is licensed through Child Care Services Association, North Carolina. See www.childcareservices.org for more information.

What do we need to do next, and how can we work together to make this happen? **Let us know** if you are interested in helping to plan and implement a project such as this for Iowa, and creating a consistent, state-wide matrix of education levels and suggested supplements. All of our good thinking together can make this happen. The result will be better care for Iowa’s young children. Join us at the Early Childhood Iowa Congress on February 11 for a session describing what a WAGES\$ program could do for our Iowa child care workforce.

Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral

Submitted by, Kathy Yoke
 Infant and Toddler Specialist
 Iowa CCR&R Region 5



<http://www.iowaccrr.org/>

Lombardi, J., (2003). *Time to care. Zero to Three* 25, 4.
 Theilheimer, R. (2006). *Molding to the children: Primary caregiving and continuity of care. Zero to Three*, 26, 3.
<http://www.child-care.org/about/continuity.tp1>
 Continuity of Care - 4C of Southern Indiana, Inc. August 11, 2008.
http://zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_key_edu..., August 28, 2008.
http://zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ter_key_edu..., August 28, 2008.

Continuity of Care - Defining High Quality Infant & Toddler Care

“Every child needs an intimate relationship with a primary caregiver over a long period of time. This is far more important to emotional and intellectual development than early cognitive training or educational games. If this relationship is absent or interrupted, a child can develop disorders of reasoning, motivation and attachment.”
 -T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. & Dr. Stanley Greenspan

There are now 12 million infants and toddlers in the United States. According to the National Survey of American Families, more than six million children under age 3 spend time in child care on a regular basis. (Urban Institute, 2001). More than 116,000 infants and toddlers in Iowa experience group child care on a regular basis.

The ideal situation to promote the emotional, physical and intellectual growth of a young child is for the child to be in the care of the same caregiver for the first three years of life. Continuity of care, with a foundation of consistency of care and primary caregiving, can provide infants and toddlers with the presence of caregiving grounded in growth-filled healthy relationships with adult caregivers. Even though caregivers may not share identical philosophy and practice, those providers invested in providing infants and toddlers with foundational relationships from their earliest caregiving experience work together, cooperate and communicate utilizing a team approach to provide consistency of care, primary caregiving, and continuity of care.

Primary caregiving, in center childcare settings, provides infants and toddlers a consistent and predictable environment in which to learn and grow. The primary caregiver tends to most of the emotional, physical, and developmental needs of each child in her primary care. When consistency is present, primary caregiving can function well, as all caregivers seek to replicate the caregiving style of the primary caregiver when caring for each child. Likewise, the primary caregiver seeks to support the care the child receives at home, through responsive communication with families and familiarity with the child’s home culture. When consistency of care and primary care are practiced, infants and toddlers can experience a community sense of working together, cooperation, and communication on their behalf.

Continuity of care means that the baby and caregiver remain together for more than one year, ideally for the first three years of the child’s life. This can happen in a variety of ways. Children can remain in the same environment, as a mixed aged grouping with the same caregiver, as in home-based child care settings. Another form of continuity of care for infants and toddlers occurs when the caregiver, in a center environment, moves with the children to another room. Moving a small group of infants and toddlers, rather than individuals children, can provide continuity of relationships for children in group care.

With continuity of care, children, their families, and caregivers learn together as the culture of their group care setting evolves. The schedule, routines, and traditions are based on knowledge of early childhood growth and development and the home cultures of the children and families. This culture of continuity of care provides an atmosphere of safety and trust. Child care is an endeavor that, with consistency, primary caregiving, and continuity of care, creates strong relationships that flow into the child’s family and into the community in which they live.

Quality care for infants and toddlers can happen only if early childhood professionals work together, share ideas, evaluate and re-evaluate their efforts. With the support of program directors, administrators, their community and legislators, these early care and education professionals together can define and re-define what quality caregiving for infants and toddlers can be.

Healthy Child Care Iowa (HCCI)



Sally Clausen, ARNP, BSN
Healthy Child Care Iowa
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Applications will be accepted until February 25, 2009!

<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/>

Healthy Child Care Iowa maintains a list of products that have a warning or have been recalled in the last six months.

To view recalled product information, first select a product category from the following list.

- [Beds, Cribs, and Bedding](#) 3 new items
- [Child Clothing, Shoes, and Accessories](#) 1 new item
- [Equipment](#) 1 new item
- [Food, Drug, Medicine hazards and recalls](#) Peanut butter recalls continue, with several local stores making announcements. To read all peanut butter associated announcements visit: <http://www.fda.gov/opacom/7alerts.html>.
- [Furniture Related to Child Care and Early Education](#) 1 new item
- [Infant related products](#) 3 new products
- [Toys and Play Related Items](#) 3 new items

[Sign Up for Email Announcements](#) *(Español)*

Get free recall and safety news by email as part of CPSC's "Drive for 1 Million" campaign.

Child Care Nurse Consultants Training

The Spring 2009 Course of the Iowa Training Project for Child Care Nurse Consultants (ITPCCNC) will be **March 2-April 24, 2009**. Applications will be accepted from February 2-25, 2009 with a course registration fee of \$200.

Organizations involved in hiring a new CCNC should be aware that significant changes have been made to the course. The course will begin with 7 weeks of structured distance learning followed by an onsite portion. In the past the onsite portion was the training, this is no longer the case. The onsite portion will be a synthesis of the distance learning, and a practicum type experience for CCNCs who have already successfully completed the distance learning portion of the course.

The complete description of the course is found in the course brochure and is available on the Healthy Child Care Iowa website:

<http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/>

National Playground Safety School (NPPS)

This is NPPS's most intensive training program. This nationally recognized safety school has been offered since 1997. The National Playground Safety School is held annually at NPPS's headquarters in Cedar Falls, IA. This school can be offered at your site on a contractual basis. Anyone may attend the training (teachers, school personnel, community empowerment, Child Care Resource and Referral, and Head Start)

Safety School Dates: August 3-6, 2009

<http://www.playgroundsafety.org/training/safetyschool.htm>



Covering Kids & Families Update

The Process Improvement Collaborative (PIC) team, which includes representatives from CKF, Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), and local outreach, works to identify and address barriers to enrollment and retention in Medicaid and *hawk-i*. Unfortunately, well-intended Medicaid and *hawk-i* eligibility, enrollment and renewal processes often create significant barriers for families. The PIC team plays a vital role in identifying barriers and implementing strategies to create positive change.

Over the past year, the PIC team represented Iowa in the *Retention Initiative: Achieving Stability in Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Coverage*, sponsored by the Southern Institute on Children and Families. The team identified the most crucial retention issues associated with streamlining Iowa's Medicaid and *hawk-i* renewal processes; engaged in PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) testing; and made process improvement recommendations. The team's accomplishments include the following:

- Improved data collection and analysis
- Successful PDSA testing determined allowing Medicaid families more time to complete and return their annual review forms resulted in fewer cancellations for failure to return the form.
- Recommended DHS send out renewal forms 30 days earlier for all public assistance programs.
- Recommended DHS allow other state agencies' electronic data systems to verify income on Medicaid and *hawk-i* applications.
- Developed and implemented a Medicaid disenrollment survey to identify reasons families fail to renew coverage.
- Enhanced marketing messages on *hawk-i* renewal reminder postcards to remind families to return their renewal form and prevent interrupted coverage.
- Recommended DHS align policies across programs to simplify the renewal process for families.

The *Retention Initiative* will cease in February 2009. The Southern Institute on Children and Families will release a report of findings from all 8 states participating in the initiative. The report will be released in spring 2009 and will be available on their Web site at: <http://www.thesoutherninstitute.org/RetentionInitiative>.

Iowa's Early Childhood Vision: Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful.