

# 2022 Annual Report



**iowa**collaboration  
for**youth**development

**State of Iowa**  
February 1, 2022



February 1, 2022

Dear Governor Reynolds and Members of the General Assembly:

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council respectfully submits its Annual Report, as required by Iowa Code Section 216A.140.

The ICYD Council is committed to providing the Legislature and Governor with information, data, and recommendations to improve the lives and futures of Iowa's youth by continuing to:

- coordinate youth policy and programs across state agencies;
- increase the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of opportunities and services for youth;
- support, adopt, and apply positive youth development practices at the state and local level.

The 2022 Annual Report spans an exceedingly interesting year that has demonstrated the value of collaboration to enhance efficiencies during crisis. The report also includes how we continued our focus on the primary issue and goal – *Increasing Iowa's Graduation Rate to 95% by 2020*. The 2020 graduation rate fell short of the goal, however increased by 3.5% since 2011.

In 2021, the ICYD Council shifted focus to authentic youth engagement. Multiple strategies are being developed that will provide state agency staff the skills to recruit and engage young people with lived experience on specific topics that will provide additional insight, which will drive policy decisions. The ICYD Council hopes to embed youth voice in decisions affecting youth issues and work together as a team by making the best use of existing resources to maximize efficiency in state government in order to create substantial and lasting positive changes for Iowa's youth. In addition, learning new ways to work smarter became commonplace.

The ICYD Council continues to leverage grant funding and in-kind staff support to implement many of the recommended actions without increased funding. However, as the state continues to invest in Iowa's youth, ICYD will continue to prioritize actions where that investment may be directed to maximize positive outcomes. These include sustaining the use of the Iowa Youth Survey every two years, formalizing positive youth development and expanding authentic youth engagement opportunities in state and local governments, along with funding for youth to participate in more state-level initiatives. In addition, as pilot projects are completed (currently funded with grants), there will be a need to incorporate effective programs into current agency structures that facilitate expansion to other areas in the state.

We look forward to working with the Governor's Office and the Legislature to promote authentic youth engagement in Iowa. The ICYD Council will continue to keep you informed of the progress made toward that goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this information.

Sincerely,



San Wong  
Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Council

State of Iowa  
**Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Council**  
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<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/criminal-juvenile-justice-planning/councils/iowa-collaboration-youth-development>

**Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development Council Members**  
February 2022

San Wong, Director, Department of Human Rights  
Steve Michael, ICYD Chair, Division Administrator, Department of Human Rights  
Wendy Greenman, WIOA Program Coordinator, Iowa Workforce Development  
Julie Hibben, Bureau of Substance Abuse, Department of Public Health  
Gary Niles, Chief Juvenile Court Officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District  
Debbie Nistler, Iowa 4-H Program Leader  
Jay Pennington, Bureau Chief, Department of Education  
James Piazza, State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC)  
Mary Sheka, Iowa Mentoring Partnership Director, Commission on Volunteer Service  
Steffani Simbric, Administrator, Child Advocacy Board  
Shanell Wagler, Facilitator, Early Childhood Iowa  
Doug Wolfe, Department of Human Services  
Dale Woolery, Director, Office of Drug Control Policy

***Acknowledgments***

The ICYD Council thanks all of the staff who contributed to producing this report. A special acknowledgment is extended to James Piazza and Lexi Duffy, who represented the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) and the Iowa Youth Congress (IYC), and provided unique perspectives and important contributions by sharing their thoughts, ideas, expertise, and youth voice. In addition, we want to thank Brianne Messer, Bri Deason, Abby King, and Monserrat Saucedo, the AmeriCorps members whose tireless dedication provided guidance and assistance to the SIYAC, IYC, Youth Action Squad, NYTD Ambassadors, and Youth Justice Council members during 2021.

A special thank you to the Mid-Iowa Health Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment. The financial support and guidance provided has been invaluable as ICYD shifts and goes “all-in” on authentic youth engagement, Youth Participatory Action Research, and our Opportunity Pathway.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – ICYD COUNCIL 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council members are leaders of 12 state entities with the vision that **“All Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood.”** The ICYD Council oversees the activities of a growing number of youth-led initiatives and has sought input from these youth in the development of more effective policies, practices, programs, and this Annual Report. In 2009, legislation passed formalizing the ICYD Council in Iowa Code §216A.140.

The ICYD Council has prioritized the following youth issue since 2010: **By 2020, Iowa will increase the graduation rate from 89% to 95%.** Iowa’s high school graduating class of 2020 four-year cohort graduation rate was 91.8%. The five-year fixed cohort graduation rate in 2019 was 93.8%. Even with this achievement, the ICYD Council recognizes that minority youth, migrant youth, youth in poverty, and youth with disabilities need additional and specific supports and services.

The ICYD Council is shifting from the very specific goal of increasing the graduation rate, to focus on creating an *Opportunity Pathway* through positive youth development and authentic youth engagement.

Specific recommendations to support the ICYD Council are to:

- Support the ICYD Council in adopting the recommendations from *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth* report from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The summary is at CJJP’s website: [https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/4%20-%20Promise%20of%20Adolescence\\_2page\\_highlights.pdf](https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/4%20-%20Promise%20of%20Adolescence_2page_highlights.pdf). The downloadable book: <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/25388/the-promise-of-adolescence-realizing-opportunity-for-all-youth>.
- Support the ICYD Council in developing new strategies to incorporate authentic youth engagement (AYE) and positive youth development principles into state-level policy and practice, which include training staff, and engaging youth on state boards and commissions, and creative ways to involve youth.
- Provide resources to support state-level youth opportunities and youth-led initiatives (e.g. State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, Achieving Maximum Potential, Iowa Youth Congress, and Youth Action Squads).
- Identifying new and better ways to provide services and supports to Iowa’s youth and families by encouraging multi-agency approaches in the development of innovative strategies and to incorporate federal initiatives.
- Provide resources to continue and expand evidence-based practices and programs as they are developed and identified and for the continued review and study of services for youth, through the collection and analysis of data.
- Support the continued use of research in the development of strategies and actions.
- Continue to develop ways to share information among agencies to address issues affecting youth who receive services and supports from multiple agencies.
- Support the continued use of state agency staff time to implement activities that meet the goals of the ICYD Council.

## I. OVERVIEW OF THE ICYD COUNCIL

This is the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council's annual report to the Governor and General Assembly. The report provides information on the:

- Purpose, goals, 2021 accomplishments, and emerging activities for 2022;
- Membership of the ICYD Council, the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC), and expansion of state-level youth initiatives;
- Progress on achieving the priority youth goal– ***Increasing Iowa's graduation rate to 95% by 2020***, with data and information on progress;
- Development of new 3-year action plan; and
- Recommendations for action in 2022 to the Governor and General Assembly.

In 2009, legislation passed placing the ICYD Council and SIYAC in Iowa Code §216A.140. Prior to becoming "codified councils", both ICYD and SIYAC operated as non-statutory entities. The ICYD began in 1999 as an informal network of state agencies from 10 departments serving as a forum to foster improvement and coordination of state and local youth policy and programs.

The ICYD Council's vision is: ***"All Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood."***

The ICYD Council meets quarterly to receive reports from state agencies and SIYAC, review progress of current activities, review data, and establish priorities and recommended actions on many issues affecting youth. The prioritized goal – ***Increasing Iowa's Graduation Rate to 95% by 2020*** – was selected due to its summative measure of youth development efforts, and the many cross-agency issues that contribute to youth graduating from high school. Each agency on the ICYD Council has a role in achieving this goal.

ICYD has historically participated in a variety of state and national youth initiatives and has been recognized nationally (e.g. National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, federal Interagency Working Group for Youth Programs, Forum for Youth Investment, and Children's Cabinet Network) for its work in coordinating youth development efforts. The ICYD Council provides a venue to enhance information and data sharing, develop strategies across state agencies, and present prioritized recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly that will improve the lives and futures of Iowa youth.

The Department of Human Rights is the lead agency and oversees activities for the ICYD Council.

### **ICYD Council's Purpose**

The ICYD Council strives to improve the lives and futures of Iowa's youth by:

- Adopting and applying positive youth development principles and practices at the state and local levels;
- Increasing the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of opportunities and services and other supports for youth;
- Improving and coordinating youth policy and programs across state agencies.

## ICYD Council's Membership

The ICYD Council's membership includes the director or chief administrator (or their designee) of 11 state entities and SIYAC. The ICYD Council has the ability to expand membership to include others that will assist the Council in achieving its purpose. In addition to each agency's director (or designee) serving on the ICYD Council, many of the agencies have additional staff that actively participate in meetings and complete tasks as directed by the ICYD Council. Below are the agencies and members of the ICYD Council:

### ICYD Council Members – February 2022

<b>Department of Human Rights</b> San Wong, Director  Steve Michael, Division Administrator Chair of ICYD Council	<b>Early Childhood Iowa</b> Shanell Wagler, Facilitator
<b>Child Advocacy Board</b> Steffani Simbric, Administrator	<b>Iowa Workforce Development</b> Wendy Greenman, WIOA Program Coordinator
<b>Commission on Volunteer Service</b> Mary Sheka, Iowa Mentoring Partnership Director	<b>ISU Extension and Outreach, 4-H Youth Development</b> Debbie Nistler, Iowa 4-H Program Leader
<b>Department of Education</b> Jay Pennington, Bureau Chief – Bureau of Information and Analysis Services	<b>Judicial Branch</b> Gary Niles, Chief Juvenile Court Officer 3 <sup>rd</sup> Judicial District
<b>Department of Human Services</b> Doug Wolfe, Program Planner	<b>Office of Drug Control Policy</b> Dale Woolery, Director
<b>Department of Public Health</b> Julie Hibben, Bureau of Substance Abuse	<b>State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC)</b> James Piazza, Chair Bri Deason, SIYAC Coordinator

## II. INCREASING IOWA'S GRADUATION RATE

**Good is the enemy of great.** And that is one of the reasons that we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools.  
-Jim Collins in *Good to Great* (2001)

In the first ICYD annual report dated February 1, 2010, the ICYD Council agreed that the focal point for collaborative youth development efforts should address a specific and aggressive goal for the state, which is: ***By 2020, Iowa will increase the high school graduation rate from 89% to 95%.***

It is with the understanding that several issues (e.g. substance abuse, family, employment, teen pregnancy, and mental health) prevent many youth from graduating from high school. The ICYD Council work to address these issues as individual agencies and together as a team to maximize efficiency in state government, make the best use of existing resources, and create substantial and lasting positive changes for Iowa's youth.

Performance measures to assist in showing all youth are on the path to graduate are:

1. The number of students at each high school grade level who are on the trajectory to graduate on time.
2. The gaps for graduation and dropout rates for subpopulations (i.e. race, ethnicity, second language learners, low socioeconomic, and students with disabilities).

In March 2021, the Department of Education released the 2020 high school graduation data. Data show 91.8 percent of students in Iowa's Class of 2020 graduated within four years, up from 91.6 percent in the Class of 2019. Since 2011, Iowa's four-year graduation rate has increased 3.5 percentage points overall, with significant gains in nearly every student demographic subgroup.<sup>1</sup>

"More Iowans are graduating high school better equipped to meet the demands of the 21st century economy," said Gov. Reynolds. "Whether it's through computer science, STEM or work-based learning, we are changing the way our students learn and removing barriers that exist for underserved communities. Today's announcement is an important milestone, but our work continues to guarantee student success well beyond high school."<sup>2</sup>

Iowa's five-year graduation rate – which reflects students who were part of a graduating class but took an extra year to finish high school – was 93.8 percent for the Class of 2019, up from 93.5 percent for the Class of 2018.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.educateiowa.gov/article/2020/03/03/iowa-s-high-school-graduation-rate-reaches-record-high-916-percent>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

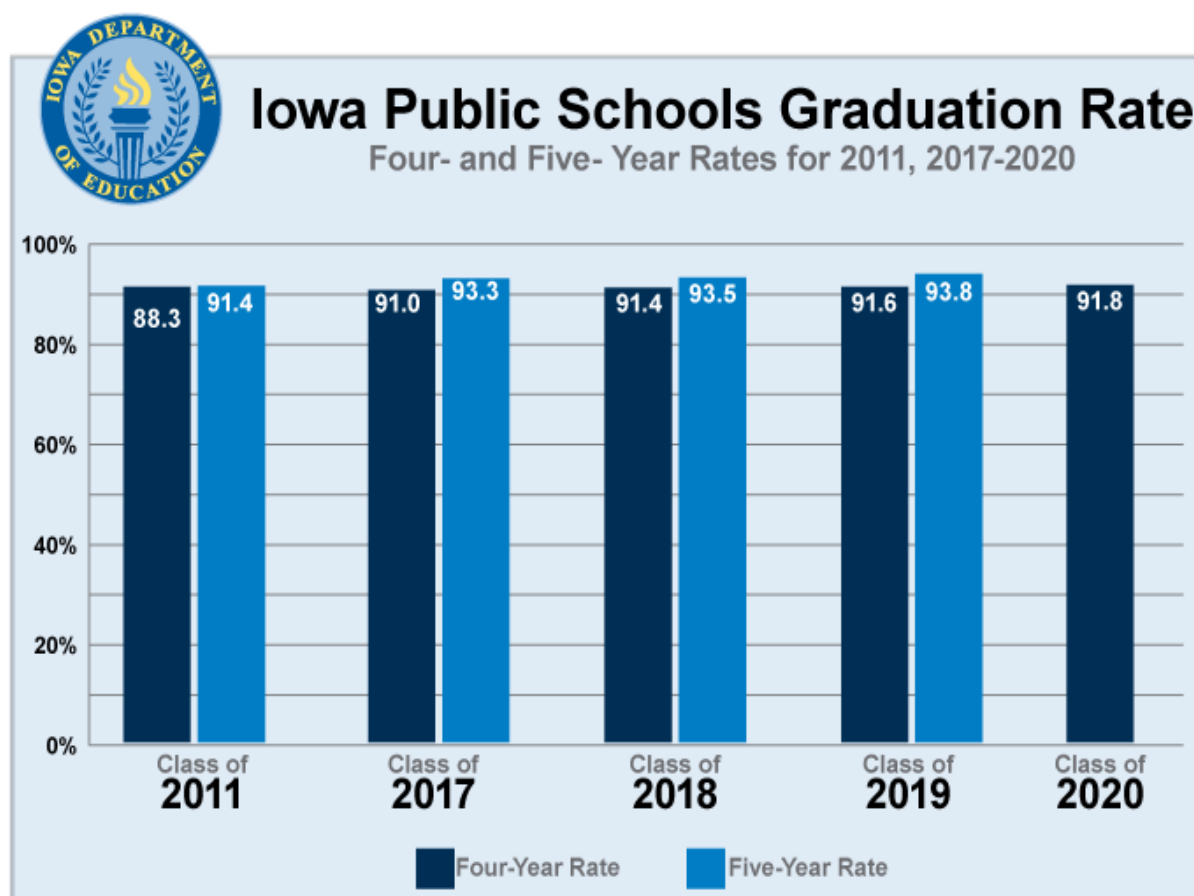
<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Iowa's annual dropout rate reflects the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who drop out of school during a single year. The annual dropout rate dipped to 2.61 percent for the 2018-19 school year from 2.2 percent for the previous school year.<sup>4</sup>

### Graduation and Dropout Data

Iowa graduation rates are calculated with a formula established by the U.S. Department of Education. Unique student identification numbers allow school districts to account for all ninth-grade students as they move through high school. At the state level, the method helps determine when a student graduates, even if the student has switched districts in Iowa during high school. See Appendix 1 for the graduation rate calculation methodology.

Table 1




<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

Table 1 shows the four- and five- year fixed graduation rates for the Classes of 2011, 2017, 2018, 2019. The 2020 four-year graduation rate is also provided.

- Iowa's graduation rate increased 3.5% between 2011 and 2020.
- The five-year graduation rate for 2020 is not available.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Table 2

	Four-Year Graduation Rate by Student Subgroup					
	Class of 2011	Class of 2017	Class of 2018	Class of 2019	Class of 2020	Comparison 2011-20
All	88.3%	91.0%	91.4%	91.6%	91.8%	3.5% ↑
Individualized Education Program	69.9%	74.2%	76.5%	76.1%	76.4%	6.5% ↑
Low Socioeconomic Status	78.1%	83.7%	84.4%	85.2%	85.5%	7.4% ↑
English Learners	70.0%	80.3%	79.3%	78.8%	76.7%	6.7% ↑
African American	73.2%	82.3%	81.3%	81.6%	80.7%	7.5% ↑
American Indian	79.2%	83.3%	75.6%	77.3%	82.5%	3.3% ↑
Asian	88.5%	92.5%	92.5%	92.3%	93.7%	5.2% ↑
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	81.6%	77.5%	75.3%	77.0%	75.5%	-6.1% ↓
Hispanic	75.2%	82.4%	83.9%	84.5%	84.8%	9.6% ↑
Multi-racial	82.0%	85.2%	87.7%	88.3%	88.8%	6.8% ↑
White	90.2%	92.7%	93.2%	93.3%	93.8%	3.6% ↑

Individualized Education Program: Students who participate in special education programs  
 English Learners: Students whose native language is not English and participate in an English Learners program  
 Low Socioeconomic Status: Students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals  
 Multi-Racial: Non-Hispanic students identified as more than one race

<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

Table 2 shows the four-year fixed graduation rates for the Classes of 2011, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 graduating classes.

- Among the ethnic/race subgroups, White students had the highest graduation rates at 93.8%.
- Since 2011, graduation rates for:
  - Hispanic students have climbed by 9.6%,
  - African American students have gone up by 7.5%
  - Low Socio-Economic students have gone up by 7.4%
  - Hawaiian/Pacific Islander have decreased by 6.1%, and has the lowest graduation rate in 2020 at 75.5%.
- Overall, Iowa's four-year graduation rate increased 3.5% between 2011 and 2020.

Table 3



## Five-Year Graduation Rate by Student Subgroup

	Class of 2011	Class of 2017	Class of 2018	Class of 2019
<b>All</b>	<b>91.4%</b>	<b>93.3%</b>	<b>93.5%</b>	<b>93.8%</b>
Individualized Education Program	80.7%	82.3%	83.1%	83.4%
Low Socioeconomic Status	83.6%	87.7%	87.9%	89.1%
English Learners	80.1%	86.4%	85.5%	85.0%
African American	79.3%	86.2%	85.2%	86.6%
American Indian	82.5%	85.8%	79.8%	79.8%
Asian	92.0%	94.9%	96.1%	95.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	86.8%	84.5%	80.0%	83.9%
Hispanic	82.3%	87.3%	87.8%	88.7%
Multi-racial	86.1%	88.6%	91.0%	90.5%
White	92.8%	94.6%	94.9%	95.1%

**Individualized Education Program:** Students who participate in special education programs

**English Learners:** Students whose native language is not English and participate in an English Learners program

**Low Socioeconomic Status:** Students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals

**Multi-Racial:** Non-Hispanic students identified as more than one race


<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

The five-year fixed cohort graduation rates for the graduating class of 2011 through 2019 are displayed in Table 3. The overall graduation rate in 2019 is 93.8%.

- The Asian subgroup had the highest graduation rate at 95.6%, followed by the White subgroup at 95.1%.
- The American Indian students had the lowest graduation rate – 79.8%, among the subgroups.
- Overall, Iowa's five-year graduation rate increased 2.4% between 2011 and 2019.



Table 4



	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
<b>All</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Individualized Education Program	5.2%	4.9%	4.0%	4.4%	3.9%
Low Socioeconomic Status	5.9%	5.7%	5.1%	5.1%	4.2%
English Learners	7.2%	6.6%	6.4%	6.6%	6.4%
African American	8.6%	7.2%	6.6%	6.5%	5.0%
American Indian	9.2%	7.7%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Asian	2.5%	1.4%	1.3%	1.5%	1.0%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	5.5%	5.7%	4.8%	8.1%	4.0%
Hispanic	6.4%	5.0%	4.8%	4.9%	4.3%
Multi-racial	4.6%	5.0%	4.2%	3.9%	3.1%
White	2.8%	2.2%	2.0%	1.9%	1.6%

**Individualized Education Program:** Students who participate in special education programs  
**English Learners:** Students whose native language is not English and participate in an English Learners program  
**Low Socioeconomic Status:** Students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals  
**Multi-Racial:** Non-Hispanic students identified as more than one race

<https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

Table 4 shows Iowa's annual dropout rate, which reflects the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who drop out of school during a single year.

- The annual dropout rate decreased to 2.2% for the 2019-2020 school year from 2.6% for the previous school year.
- Asian students had the lowest dropout rate of 1.0%.
- American Indian students had the highest dropout rate of 6.9%.

### III. THREE-YEAR ACTION PLAN – YOUTH OPPORTUNITY PATHWAY

Based on the graduation and dropout data, the ICYD Council recognizes that minority youth, migrant youth, youth in poverty, and youth with disabilities need additional and specific supports and services.

ICYD strives to engage these youth and provide opportunities to remove barriers so these students are able to graduate from high school and have life-long opportunities.

The ICYD Council is shifting from the very specific goal of increasing the graduation rate, to focus on creating an *Opportunity Pathway* through positive youth development and authentic youth engagement.

During 2021, the ICYD Council finalized a three-year action plan to:

***Improve the status of Iowa youth through shared accountability and systemic collaboration, coordination, and authentic youth engagement.***

The Council developed overarching values that will SHAPE our work together:

- **Shared Accountability:** To achieve maximum results, we will engage leaders across boundaries of various state agencies and sectors towards shared results and will share accountability for the progress toward that result through aligned actions and sharing of resources.
- **Healing-Centered:** Trauma is a collective experience that must be met with holistic supports. For solutions to be effective, actions must address root causes, address harm, and restore well-being by shifting from a culture of harm, discipline, punishment, and confinement to restoration, hope and healing. We must advance the conditions to make systems healing-centered (including addressing mental models, moving from transaction to transformational relationships and connections, power dynamics, resource flows, practices and policies).
- **Authentic Youth Engagement:** The perspectives and expertise of young people are critical in understanding the issues governments are called upon to address, and essential in creating solutions that work.
- **Progress:** ICYD state agencies will continue to intentionally collaborate and show progress on the issues of equity, authentic engagement, healing-centered engagement and shared accountability.
- **Equity:** Historical inequities cannot be corrected by ignoring them. For statewide solutions to be effective, marginalized voices must be included, data must be disaggregated (by race, geography, gender and other relevant variables) and policies and programs must be responsive to the particular needs and strengths of each community and group of youth in Iowa.

## **BLUEPRINT TO ACHIEVE AUTHENTIC YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

Youth engagement is a powerful way for community-based organizations and government agencies to involve the young people they serve to improve the system. The young people provide opportunities to make challenging actions to create positive social change. Youth engagement offers the expertise and partnership of young people, helping adults fully understand what it is like to grow up in a rapidly changing world while navigating the various systems and policies impacting the lives of youth each day. Youth provide a valuable and unique perspective to address issues due to the “way they think” (brain development) and they are closer to the problems and know more about the issues – their lived expertise.

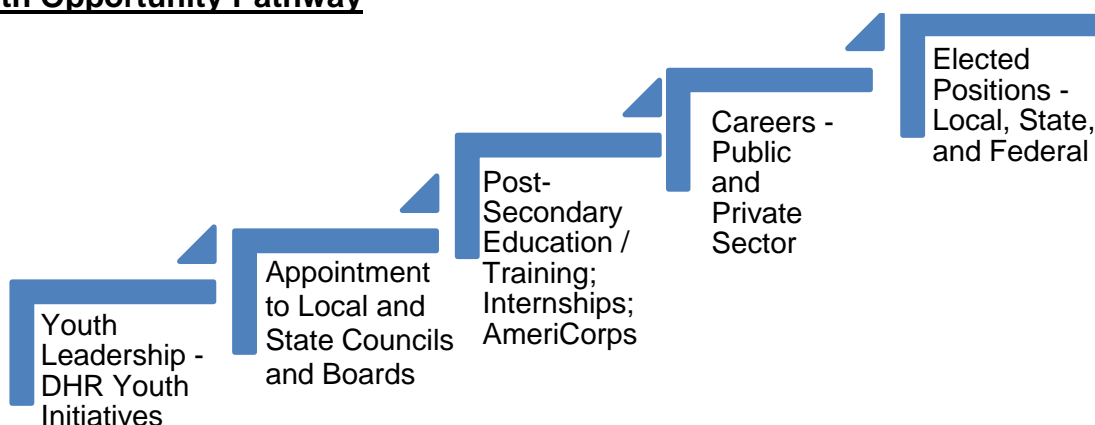
The approach has started with the development of an interactive youth leadership and civic engagement curriculum and set of strategies, which has added structured training, coaching, and education for youth to utilize these new skills to successfully advocate on local, state, and national issues. The process provides topical training on positive youth development (PYD) and brain development, advocacy, leadership, and youth participatory action research (YPAR). In addition, expert panels provide specific information on the issues. Another unique aspect of this approach is that youth are the facilitators/trainers of the curriculum and are leading the process.

The goal is to fully develop a Youth Opportunity Pathway that will:

- Intentionally recruit diverse youth to participate on the Opportunity Pathway
- Provide advocacy and leadership skills to youth
- Establish opportunities for youth to become leaders and decision-makers
- Provide training and technical assistance for state agency staff on authentic youth engagement (AYE) and PYD strategies

As the skills are built and opportunities expand, youth will be prepared to follow a path of additional opportunities of public service and to a career of their choosing.

## Youth Opportunity Pathway



### Completing the Youth Opportunity Pathway

The ICYD Council leads the PYD and AYE implementation and coordinate the trainings of youth and state agency staff, and is the clearinghouse for information and resources.

The following strategies are being implemented:

- Training and technical assistance for ICYD Council agencies on PYD and AYE that will lead to authentic youth voice in policy making and decisions.
- Identify additional opportunities for youth and ensure youth have access to be engaged with government agencies. ICYD Council will create / enhance clearinghouse of opportunities on the website, and provide guidance on connecting youth with appropriate opportunities.
- Involve youth in continuous quality improvement process to improve services for youth.
- Intentionally recruit diverse youth to participate, including youth with lived experience. Lived experience is “representation and understanding of an individual’s human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one’s perception of knowledge, based on one’s own life”.<sup>5</sup>
- Identify and highlight current youth engagement activities in state agencies.
- Local service agencies and community entities will be encouraged to implement PYD and AYE approaches.

Youth Opportunity Pathway project’s goals:

- *Connect* the voices and expertise of youth directly affected to decisions that impact their well-being and dignity
- *Connect* initiatives driven by the community and those most impacted by challenges to existing assets and resources

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<sup>5</sup> Skelton-Wilson, Syreeta, Ph.D. et.al. (2021). *Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience, Improving Federal Research, Policy, and Practice*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1bb6cd68f81e1bb74e3bf30e1085a354/lived-experience-brief.pdf>

- *Connect* data and research *to* meaningful action
- *Connect* system-focused policies and practices *to* collaborative and equitable approaches implemented with cultural humility
- *Connect* strategies *to* knowledge that children live in families and families live in communities
- *Connect* decision makers *to* greater understanding of root causes and solutions.

Youth engagement is most successful when it is authentic and supported by youth-adult partnerships. The question is, what makes the engagement “authentic”? Throughout the decades, agencies, organizations, and boards have struggled to authentically engage and create decision-making positions for young people. The failure so often begins when adults and youth are inadequately prepared to work together as equal partners as a result of pre-existing attitudes of both adults and young people.

Authentic youth engagement is achieved when young people experience the following:

- Are respected for their ideas and opinions and are free to state them;
- Are working in an environment that facilitates their engagement, and they are involved in a meaningful way as teachers as well as students;
- Are equal partnership in all aspects of their own individual planning and decision-making;
- Are equal partners in making decisions and determining the direction of programs and activities, including the creation of the agency’s policy, the program or service itself, the training curriculum, and delivery of the program or services;
- Expect to, and receive, consistent opportunities to set goals, devise strategies, and act;
- Participate in challenging experiences, with the necessary support to help them succeed; and
- Thrive when adults listen to them, respect them, and engage them in meaningful programs and activities.<sup>6</sup>

It takes time for adults and youth to fully embrace and create a culture and environment that will foster authentic youth engagement. This time of norming allows adults and youth to feel comfortable with one another, to agree on areas of importance, and to come to decisions that are agreed on by both partners. While the idea is simple and the process laborious, the benefits of ensuring authentic youth voice and participation are invaluable for all.

The ICYD Council is embarking on new strategies to incorporate authentic youth engagement (AYE) into state-level policy and practice. The new approach started in 2021, with the development of the initial Youth Action Squads (YAS) that focused on racial justice and COVID-19 effects. The groups of 25 youth (14-24 years of age) receive structured training, coaching, and education that includes Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is providing them with the skills and opportunities to

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/Youth%20Voice.pdf>

successfully create and implement an action plan and advocate on local, state, and national issues.

In order for these opportunities to be available and successful, state agency decision makers must receive training and technical assistance on positive youth development (PYD) and AYE.

Long-term goals:

- State agencies have a commitment for authentic youth engagement that includes partnering with youth to create and deliver improved services and resources.
- Youth are active members on state boards, commissions, and councils.
- Youth are participating in authentic state agency decision making.

What it will take to make it happen:

- ICYD to lead the PYD and AYE implementation and coordinate the trainings of youth and state agency staff, and be the clearinghouse for information and resources.
- State agencies commit to the need for authentic youth voice in policy making and decisions on services.
- Identify additional opportunities for youth
- Ensure youth have access to become engaged with government agencies.
- Involve youth in continuous quality improvement (CQI) process to improve services.
- Intentionally recruit diverse youth to participate in trainings.
- Identify and highlight current youth engagement activities in state agencies.
- Local service agencies and community entities are encouraged to implement PYD and AYE approaches.

There are multiple state- and local-level youth initiatives providing leadership opportunities for youth. The multiple initiatives need to be better aligned and coordinated to attract more youth to participate and to specifically seek more diverse youth. Many of these initiatives target underrepresented youth. All of them promote opportunities for youth to engage state and local leaders, discuss issues affecting youth, and develop leadership skills.

The ICYD Council is leading the coordination effort of the multiple agencies and organizations that support state-level youth-fueled councils and initiatives. The goal is to effectively remove barriers for historically underrepresented youth by empowering them to realize their leadership capabilities and by challenging adults to recognize and engage youth. The effort will equip youth with the tools to communicate their vision, inspire collaboration, and make significant contributions that result in positive change.

Once the foundation of PYD and AYE are incorporated in state agencies, specific topics will be selected to prioritize, study, and develop strategies to improve. Identified priorities are:

- Mental health access;
- School culture and climate – ensure schools are safe;

- Educational, vocational, and personal development opportunities to enhance the successful transition to adulthood.

Currently, the ICYD Council and the Department of Human Rights oversees the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC), the Iowa Youth Congress (IYC) and the Youth Action Squads (YAS). For some youth this experience is the first step of a very long journey on the Opportunity Pathway. A summary of the outcomes of these three youth initiatives is Appendix 2.

## **STATE OF IOWA YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (SIYAC) – PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES**

The purpose of SIYAC, as stated in Iowa Code §216A.140(8), is to “foster communication among a group of engaged youth and the Governor, the General Assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families; and to advocate for youth on important issues affecting youth.” SIYAC’s mission statement is: “to raise awareness of issues that affect young Iowans by providing civic opportunity and to inspire youth to create a better future for Iowa.”

Originally established in 2001, SIYAC was formalized in Iowa Code in 2009 as an avenue for youth to inform state leaders and local communities on issues important to young people. SIYAC consists of 21 youth aged 14 to 20 who reside in Iowa. Members serve two-year staggered terms that begin in July. SIYAC meets biweekly over Conference Call and quarterly in-person.

In the fall, SIYAC conducts research across the state to identify issues impacting their peers. Information collected from surveys, focus groups, feedback walls, interviews and from other existing data sources (like the Iowa Department of Public Health’s Iowa Youth Survey) is used to identify the key areas SIYAC will focus for the year. Members’ garnered eight-hundred-seventy responses from youth across the state of Iowa. SIYAC identified youths’ concerns about education, mental health, racial equity, youth access, environmental issues, youth opportunities, inequality, sexual violence, life skills education, and the lack of representation of young people in decision and policy making. As a result of the data collected, SIYAC formed the following committees: Service, Health, Education, Environment, and Race Equity. Members of each Committee determine how to best address each issue using 3 main strategies: advocacy, service and public awareness. The committees and descriptions of the topics are below and in Appendix 3:

### **Education Committee:**

- Proposing a position statement to support the change of and innovation in the K-12 Education System and to invest in staff and student retention by investing in hands-on learning materials and project or opportunity-based learning in classrooms.

**Health Committee:**

- Working with schools and mental health organizations to improve mental health in Iowa schools and propose a position statement to introduce menstrual product availability into high schools. As of January 2022, the menstrual equity position statement was officially introduced as Senate File 2020.

**Service Committee:**

- Assisting in planning a group service project, helping with individual service projects, and making service opportunities more available for youth. Service Committee members are currently creating Iowa's first State of the Youth Report which is set to be released Spring 2022.

**Racial Equity:**

- Increasing public awareness on issues relating to racial equity by creating a podcast called, "What's Not Clicking?"

**Environmental Committee:**

- Increasing public awareness and promoting small scale environmental change by sharing a position statement that supports increased elementary education around the environment and recycling.

SIYAC members also conduct two service projects—individually in their home communities, and jointly as a Council. In 2021, SIYAC's joint project was derecho clean-up in Marshalltown's Riverview Park. Individual service projects included:

- a phone drive for Easter Seals,
- tying blankets for local shelters,
- writing stories for the Northside Writing Project,
- creating a youth led group to advocate for climate change, and
- assisting with the eradication of an invasive species attacking endangered wild prairie species.

SIYAC also conducts an annual public awareness campaign with last year's being around the COVID-19 Vaccine.

SIYAC members participate in ICYD Council meetings. The ICYD Council oversees the activities of SIYAC and seeks input from these youth leaders in the development of more effective state-wide policies, practices, and programs. SIYAC members also serve on various other committees and councils, including Volunteer Iowa's Service Learning Committee, the International Summit on Student Voice and the Department of Public Health's State Epidemiological Workgroup Prevention Partnerships Advisory Council. In addition, Soomin Koh has been appointed by Governor Reynolds to serve on the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council.

In partnership with the Iowa Department of Human Rights (DHR), SIYAC will participate in the DHR's Day on the Hill on March 1, 2022, to meet with legislators and community leaders to advocate for their youth-focused position statements.



#### Notable SIYAC accomplishments during 2021:

- SIYAC was awarded the Governor's Volunteer award.
- Former SIYAC Chair, William Keck, is serving as Simpson's Student Body Vice President for the 2021-22 Academic School Year.
- Kendall Jones was elected the Chair of LULAC Youth in Ottumwa.
- Trey Voeller is serving as the President of his FFA (Future Farmers of America) Chapter.
- Abby King was hired as a Youth Action and Research Specialist within the Department of Human Rights as an AmeriCorps member.
- Volta Adovor, William Keck, and Abby King were facilitators for the inaugural Youth Action Squad, a program by the Department of Human Rights.
- Brenda Koumondji is a facilitator for this year's Youth Action Squad.
- Soomin Koh and Klaertje Hesselink are co-chairs of Volunteer Iowa's Youth Outreach and Service Learning Committee.
- Former Vice Chair, Alexander Drahos, was selected to attend the United States Senate Youth Program.
- Service Chair, Klaertje Hesselink, was a participant in the Congressional Award, receiving the bronze medal. Hesselink also participates in the Iowa All-State Orchestra.
- Lily Glenn serves as her county's 4-H council Vice President.
- Folasade Olawoye graduated with honors from Liberty High School and was on the 2021 Fall Dean's list at the University of Iowa.

#### 2021-2022 SIYAC Members (Alphabetized by first name):

Name	Office Held	City	County
Achinteya Jayaram		Bettendorf	Scott
Abby King		Dubuque	Dubuque
Brenda Koumondji		Cedar Falls	Black Hawk
Eric Johnson		Rock Valley	Sioux
Folasade Olawoye		North Liberty	Johnson
Hannah Dillehay		Council Bluffs	Pottawattamie
James Piazza	<i>Chair</i>	Des Moines	Polk
Kendall Jones		Ottumwa	Wapello
Klaertje Hesselink	<i>Service Chair, Service Committee Chair</i>	Cedar Falls	Black Hawk

Name	Office Held	City	County
Koro Castillo		Cedar Falls	Black Hawk
Paras Bassuk	<i>Legislative Affairs Chair, Education Committee Chair</i>	Dubuque	Dubuque
Lily Glenn	<i>Health Committee Chair</i>	Ottumwa	Wapello
Lulu Roarick	<i>Secretary</i>	Iowa City	Johnson
Monica Malek		Dubuque	Dubuque
Reyna Roach	<i>IDEA Chair, Environment Committee Chair</i>	Iowa City	Johnson
Soomin Koh	<i>Vice Chair</i>	Iowa City	Johnson
Sophia Polking	<i>Public Relations</i>	Carroll	Carroll
Tate Gieseemann		Bellevue	Jackson
Trey Voeller		Prairie City	Jasper
Volta Adovor	<i>Race Equity Committee Chair</i>	Ankeny	Polk

## IOWA YOUTH CONGRESS – PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

The purpose of Iowa Youth Congress (IYC) is to enhance opportunity and broader representation of all Iowans in the government process. IYC also provides students the knowledge, abilities, and direction to advocate and enact change in their communities and at the state level for issues affecting youth.

Through the IYC experience, students attain a variety of skills including:

- public speaking
- problem-solving
- political debate in multicultural leadership settings
- advocacy
- developing a deeper understanding and application of democratic decision making, government, and public engagement

Established in 2006, IYC was created to provide youth of all backgrounds the opportunity to gain hands-on education in the subject areas of state government, democracy, advocacy, and civic engagement. Iowa Youth Congress consists of up to 100 high-school-aged youth who reside in Iowa. Members begin their term in July and

meet quarterly to identify issues affecting youth, discuss community needs, form partnerships to meet those needs, draft positions on youth issues, communicate those positions with legislators, and plan and conduct service activities. IYC presents information and recommendations on youth issues in the form of position statements to the Iowa General Assembly during the legislative session. IYC members each carry out service projects so that they can get involved with their communities and the issues facing them. Additionally, some IYC members also participate in ICYD Council meetings.

Notable IYC accomplishments during 2021:

- During the 2021 Legislative Session, IYC's Banning the Gay/Trans Panic Defense position statement, was introduced into legislation as HF2503. It passed unanimously in the House of Representatives and was voted through the Senate Judiciary subcommittee.
- In August, Iowa Youth Congress members met with their districts to set the issue areas they would focus on during the 2021-2022 IYC term. Eleven position statements outlining the issues were then created.
- IYC's annual Mock Congress was held in November and emulated the House of Representatives. During this time, each position statement (or "bill") was introduced, debated, and voted on. Those that received a majority vote became official IYC legislative priorities.
  - At this event, Director San Wong, Sonya Streit, Steve Michael, and Senator Sarah Trone Garriott spoke.
- IYC held a virtual Meeting in November with subject matter experts related to their position statements and ask questions to these experts. Speakers included:
  - Dr. Gerta Bardhoshi, Iowa Center for School Mental Health
  - Dr. Allison Bruhn, Iowa Center for School Mental Health
  - John Foster, Black Hawk County Solid Waste Management Commission
  - Kelly Marie Meek, Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (IowaCASA)
- On January 20th, 2022, IYC and the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) held their Legislative Prep Day at the State Capitol. Youth scheduled meetings with legislators, learned how to call legislators out of session, attended committee meetings, and informed legislators and other professionals at the Capitol about the youth programs and issues impacting youth in Iowa.
- In the 2022 Legislative Session, IYC's Education Committee's position statement has been sponsored and introduced by both the House and the Senate as HF2098 and SF2071. SF2071 is currently in the Education Subcommittee
- In February 2022, students will have the opportunity to shadow members of the Executive, Judicial, and Legislative branches of government. IYC is coordinating this week-long event for other DHR youth programs and councils.

- In partnership with the DHR, IYC will participate in the DHR's Day on the Hill on March 1, 2022 to meet with legislators and community leaders in order to advocate for their youth-focused position statements.

During the Mock Congress in November 2021, IYC approved 6 issue area priorities for the 2021-2022 year and developed four committees: Education, Environmental, Student Voice, and Equity. IYC has prioritized the following diverse issues to advocate for during the 2022 Legislative Session (Appendix 4):

#### **Education Committee:**

- Sexual Violence Prevention and Awareness: This bill would incorporate the addition of sexual violence awareness and prevention into the current K-12 sexual education curriculum in order to focus on prevention rather than postvention actions.
- Mental Health Curriculum: This Mental Health Curriculum would require mental health education for students in grades 5-12 to be implemented through Iowa's districts and school Boards of Education.

#### **Environment Committee:**

- Iowa Schools Recycling Plan: This legislation would reorder recycling in Iowa schools to emphasize the importance of proper waste management methods, and allocating funding and guidelines to do so.

#### **Student Voice Committee:**

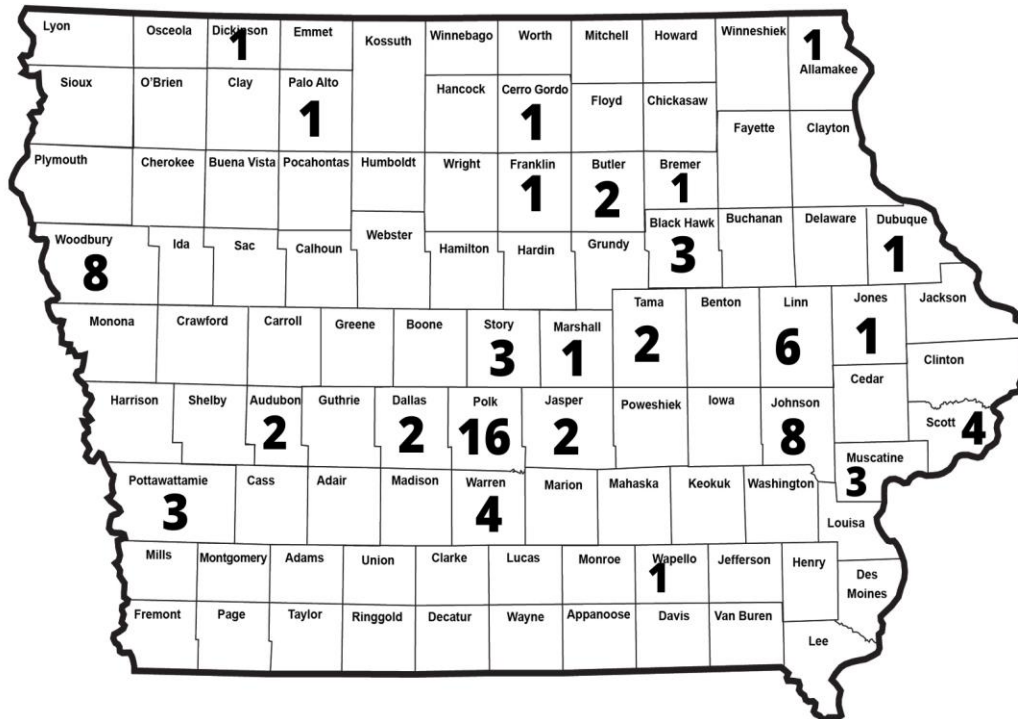
- Student Representatives on School Boards: Student Representation legislation would require all Iowa schools to allow a minimum of one non-voting student member on school boards throughout Iowa to increase student voice and transparency in schools.

#### **Equity Committee:**

- Subsidizing Student Activities: This bill would expand the Student Activity Fund by providing money to school districts specifically to subsidize approved extracurricular activities.
- Disability Education in Schools: Disability Education in Schools would require additional training for educators to better identify, assist, and collaborate with students to accommodate any mental disabilities.

## 2021-2022 IYC Members:

Iowa Youth Congress currently has 76 youth from across Iowa. They represent 24 different counties, 36 cities, and 43 different high schools.



The following IYC members received notable recognition for their individual achievements over the past year:

- Over the summer of 2021, first-year member Amukta Gantalamohini did an internship at the Capitol Complex in the Wallace Building
- Second-year member Volta Adovor and first-year member Abby King applied, interviewed, and were appointed to the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) for the 2021-2023 term
- IYC member Lexi Duffy is one of two Iowa high schoolers selected to participate in the 2022 United States Senate Youth Program
- Third-year member Beatrice Kaskie won third place for the Robert Mannheimer Youth Advocacy Award, which was presented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). She won the award for founding and amplifying multiple youth justice programs and groups at Liberty High School
- Members Jayne Abraham, Alexandra Curtu, Claire Gilbert, Kavya Kalathur, and Alicia Kamran were all named 2022 candidates for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program

## **YOUTH ACTION SQUAD – PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES**

In 2020, two crises dramatically impacted youth and young adults in Iowa--racism and COVID-19. These crises also began to intersect with other issues impacting Iowa youth, proving a greater need for intentional and aligned community action through shared power and partnership with young people. Realizing the toll of racism and a global pandemic on the well-being and potential of young Iowans, the ICYD recognized an opportunity to engage youth and give them a voice to current issues.

This realization, coupled with the findings from the Promise of Adolescence<sup>1</sup>, mobilized the ICYD, with oversight from the Iowa Department of Human Rights, to take part in a grant opportunity with the Forum for Youth Investment, an action tank working with national, state and local leaders to change the odds that all young people are ready by 21. The grant opportunity allowed us to respond to the crises in partnership with young people to create the Youth Action Squad (YAS), and was driven by the belief that those closest to the issues are the ones closest to the solutions but farthest from the resources and power.

The YAS was created to resource 50 Iowa youth and young adults who have been marginalized from government due to discrimination and historical exclusion, through participatory action research and community organizing. YAS members were supported and empowered to take actions on issues most important to them with solutions they created through intentional training and coaching on advocacy, research and organizing, proximity to major decision-makers, access to information and resources, a safe space to talk through issues and solutions, weekly coaching check-ins to assess progress and barriers, and financial compensation for their time.

The YAS operates under the following philosophies:

1. Young people are the experts on the experiences and needs of youth.
2. Adolescents are capable of high-level action.
3. Lived experience is a critical asset for adolescents seeking to make change at any systems level.
4. Those closest to the issues are the ones closest to the solutions, but farthest from the resources and power

There were two cohorts of the 2021 YAS, one for Racial Justice and one for COVID-19. YAS members had agency to identify the issues they were most interested in after conducting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative research. Members created and implemented an action plan in their communities, either individually or with other YAS members. The 2021 YAS action plan topics are in Appendix 5.

Data collected from YAS members was also used to inform the development of ICYD's three-year Plan.

Notable achievements:

- The Youth Action Squad collected data directly from their peers about issues most important to them, resulting in over 2,000 youth voices being uplifted and amplified by YAS members.
- Nixon Benitez implemented the first-ever Spanish language column in the Northern Iowa, the University of Northern Iowa's student newspaper. As a result of this work, Nixon earned the University of Northern Iowa's 2021 Diversity Matters award. In 2021, Nixon was also inducted to the state's Latino Hall of Fame.
- Lyric Sellers and Endi Montalvo-Martinez successfully petitioned the Des Moines Public School Board, in coalition with other Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) students and community stakeholders, to eliminate the use of School Resource Officers at all DMPS campuses, and to implement a restorative justice model in the schools. YAS members requested data from DHR on school arrests to use for this action plan. In 2022, Lyric and Endi won ACLU of Iowa's Robert Mannheimer Youth Advocacy Award as a result of their work. They have presented at several state and national conferences and meetings to share their work including through Urban Institute and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.
- Clowey Tyler met with the DMPS superintendent and school board members to share YPAR data on student mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic and to recommend more support.
- At least 7 youth felt supported to speak directly with their school board members for the first time. At least 4 members felt supported to speak directly with legislators for the first time.
- Elle Fitzgerald won a college scholarship because of her work developing and implementing an Action Plan to improve mental health supports for older youth during COVID-19.
- Two YAS members became summer AmeriCorps members at DHR. Bri Deason became a full-time AmeriCorps member and is currently coordinating the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council.
- Clowey Tyler and Brenda Koumondji were YAS members last year and are this year's YAS Facilitators. Last year's facilitator, Abby King, is now coordinating the Youth Action Squads.
- YAS members have presented their data and action plans at other councils, conferences and events, including: the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, Justice Advisory Board, panelists at Prevent Child Abuse Iowa's annual conference, speakers at Youth Action Hour's Youth Address the Nation event, planning team members of the International Summit on Student Voice, panelists and partners for Iowa's Healing-Centered Engagement work, and actors for the Iowa Department of Public Health's Iowa Youth Survey video campaign.

## IV. RESEARCH AND DATA

The ICYD will continue to utilize research and data to identify issues and measure results. Multiple sources of data and ongoing collection of research by national experts continues to be utilized to provide guidance to relevant topics. Below are ongoing efforts to assist ICYD's efforts.

### **Adolescent Brain Research and Implications for Youth Programs**

*The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth (2019)* report from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine has found that changes in brain structure and connectivity that happen during adolescence (10-25 years of age) provide young people with unique opportunities for positive, life-shaping development, and for recovery from past adversity. The report has recommendations for multiple systems (education, health care, child welfare, and justice) to capitalize on the opportunities and for addressing inequities.

Economic, social, and structural disadvantage along with racism, bias, and discrimination shape life-course trajectories during adolescence, by reducing opportunities and supports that are available for other youth, and increasing risks that other youth do not experience.

Investments in programs and interventions that capitalize on the brain's capacity to change during adolescence can promote shifts in young people's life trajectories, for youth who may have and are facing adverse experiences.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Recommendations for the education system:*

- *Rectify disparities in resources for least-advantaged schools and students.*
- *Design purposeful but flexible pathways through education.*
- *Teach practical knowledge and nonacademic skills, such as decision making, adaptability, and psychosocial skills.*
- *Protect the overall health and well-being of each student.*
- *Foster culturally sensitive learning environments.*
- *Help adolescents and families navigate the education sector.*

#### *Recommendations for the health system:*

- *Strengthen the financing of health care services for adolescents, including insurance coverage for uninsured and under-insured populations.*
- *Improve access to comprehensive, integrated, coordinated health services for adolescents.*
- *Increase access to behavioral health care and treatment services.*

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<sup>7</sup> Medicine., National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and, Richard J. Bonnie, and Emily P. Backes. *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth*. Washington, District of Columbia: The National Academies Press, 2019.



- *Increase the number of adolescent health care providers and improve their training and distribution.*
- *Improve federal and state data collection on adolescent health and well-being, and conduct adolescent-specific health services research and disseminate the findings.*

*Recommendations for the child welfare system:*

- *Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in child welfare system involvement.*
- *Promote broad uptake by the states of federal programs that promote resilience and positive outcomes for adolescents involved in the child welfare system.*
- *Provide services to adolescents and their families in the child welfare system that are developmentally informed at the individual, program, and system levels.*
- *Conduct research that reflects the full range of adolescents in the child welfare system.*
- *Foster greater collaboration among the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and health systems.*
- *Provide developmentally appropriate services for adolescents in the child welfare system.*
- *Foster greater collaboration among the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and health systems.*
- *Provide developmentally appropriate services for adolescents who engage in noncriminal misconduct without justice system involvement.*

*Recommendations for the justice system:*

- *Reduce disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability status, and sexual orientation or gender identity and expression among adolescents involved in the justice system.*
- *Ensure that youth maintain supportive relationships while involved in the justice system and receive appropriate guidance and counsel from legal professionals and caregivers.*
- *Implement policies that aim to reduce harm to justice-involved youth in accordance with knowledge from developmental science.*
- *Implement developmentally appropriate and fair policies and practices for adolescents involved in the criminal justice system.*
- *For those youth in the custody of the justice system, ensure that policies and practices are implemented to prioritize the health and educational needs of adolescents and avoid causing harm.”<sup>8</sup>*

The ICYD Council will study systemic policies and practices that disproportionately have negative impact on minority youth, and work together to implement strategies to support the *Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth* recommendations.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## **Interagency Data Sharing Agreement**

A data sharing agreement between the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Human Rights – Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning, and the Judicial Branch – State Court Administration – Juvenile Court Services has been created to share relevant information on children who are subject to court jurisdiction under Iowa Code Chapter 232. The result will be improved outcomes regarding safety, education, family stability, and reduce the likelihood of further abuse, neglect, delinquency, and criminal conduct.

## **National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)**

Iowa NYTD is a federal mandate for the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) to collect outcome information (via a standardized survey) from current and former youth in foster care or another out-of-home placement. DHS contracts with CJJP to collect the survey information from youth aged 17, 19, and 21.

Outcomes are derived from survey questions that measure youth across six domains:

- Educational attainment,
- Financial self-sufficiency,
- Access to health insurance,
- Experience with homelessness, and
- Positive connections with adults.

In FFY2021, Iowa NYTD met federal compliance by surveying 73% of the 21-year-old population and providing a required data report highlighting outcomes<sup>9</sup>. A data report summarizing the information collected from that cohort of youth is available on the NYTD website: [bit.ly/iowaNYTD](https://bit.ly/iowaNYTD). A summary of the cohort comparisons is Appendix 6.

From October 1, 2021, through September 2022, Iowa NYTD is completing surveys and obtaining outcomes from a cohort of 19-year-old youth formerly in foster care.

In addition to collecting survey results from these youth populations, Iowa NYTD will continue to positively engage youth in foster care and juvenile justice through additional outreach activities:

- “The Talking Wall”—An activity that empowers youth to contribute to system change by sharing their experiences and visions for change. In 2021, the Talking Wall was hosted at 41 different locations, included voices from 491 youth, and produced 1,466 post-it notes. Main themes from youth and young adults included: longer, more frequent and more accessible phone calls, more

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<sup>9</sup> [https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/FFY21%20NYTD%20Report\\_Final%20%28Compressed%29.pdf](https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/FFY21%20NYTD%20Report_Final%20%28Compressed%29.pdf)

visits with family while in placement, better and more food at placement, more supportive staff behaviors, gender-specific services and resources, need for financial and job support upon leaving placements, and to not charge juveniles as adults in court.

- Iowa Youth Resources Website<sup>10</sup>— The site features seven videos and other resources designed to help youth who are transitioning to adulthood. The videos focus on employment, education, housing, medication, and other resources. Although the information is aimed at youth who are exiting the foster care or delinquency systems, the resources provided can be used by all youth, parents, or others who work with youth. The site was created through a collaborative effort by Iowa NYTD, CJJP, the Juvenile ReEntry Systems Task Force, Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP), the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Boys' State Training School, and other state agencies.
- Annual Creative Expressions Art Contest—This contest is open to youth and young adults who have experienced juvenile justice, foster care or other out-of-home placement. It invites youth to submit artwork that captures the given theme of the contest. Entries include a variety of art media. In FFY2021, the theme was "See Me For Me: Looking Past Labels and Stereotypes." A total of 56 youth contributed 67 pieces of art into the contest.
- Partnerships—Continue to strengthen partnerships with the Department of Corrections, Iowa Foster Care Youth Council (AMP), the Iowa Aftercare Network, Iowa College Aide, provider agencies, Juvenile Court System, social workers, CASA/FCRB and other state and local entities.

The outcomes collected through the NYTD survey and the Talking Wall provides information on areas for improvements to the foster care system to better serve youth transitioning to independence. Here are some ways NYTD has been used by system leaders:

- Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP) used the Talking Wall data to inform their 2021 Legislative Agenda. Their agenda led to DHS more than doubling the clothing allowance for youth in foster care.
- Children's Justice, Iowa NYTD and Juvenile Court Services hosted Iowa's inaugural Family and Youth Engagement Summit as a result of the Talking Wall. Data from the Talking Wall was used to inform the layout of the Summit, the presentations selected and the Team Time structure. As a result of the Summit, all 8 of Iowa's judicial districts have created an action plan of at least 3 tangible ways to advance Family and Youth Engagement in their geographical areas. Judicial district teams were multidisciplinary and included placement staff, school staff, law enforcement, judges, GALs and others and the NYTD and Talking Wall data was used to inform their action plans.
- After hearing the Talking Wall presentation, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council voted for and allocated resources to start a Youth Justice Council

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<sup>10</sup> <https://sites.google.com/a/iowa.gov/dhr-youth-services/>

made up of youth/young adults with Juvenile Justice experience- noting the Talking Wall results as an indicator of the lack of youth voice in major decision making and system reform efforts.

- Several organizations have used Talking Wall data and/or recommendations into their training for providers and foster parents. Two notable trainings that occurred as a result of the Talking Wall:
  - Two young adults of color with foster care experience partnered with Four Oaks and NAACP to host a foster parent training on how to better support Black and African-American youth. This was a theme of this year's Talking Wall.
  - A young adult with foster care experience is co-facilitating a series of training sessions surrounding the adolescent brain with the Coalition for Youth and Families, the contractor for provider training in Iowa.
  - A training yet to be finalized but that is in the works is one directly about how to better support LGBTQ+ youth in the system as this was also a theme from the Talking Wall.
- DMACC has used the information to adjust their programming for youth in foster care and juvenile justice
- Subcommittees of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council hosted a 2+ hour working session reviewing the Talking Wall data and planning to respond. The subcommittees have decided to pursue the following actions as a result:
  - Advancing healing-centered engagement approaches in Iowa, including participating in training and developing tools for the field
  - Replicating the Parent to Parent model in the child welfare system to the Juvenile Justice system
  - Creating a toolkit about how communities can couple authentic youth engagement and data to decrease the likelihood that youth enter the system
- Each QRTP, shelter and detention center who participated in the Talking Wall received individualized reports of what their youth lifted up that were encouraged to be used to inform their own program improvement plans and staff development.
- Data was used to craft out recommendations on how Iowa can use American Rescue Plan dollars.

Overall, NYTD strives to center youth voice through compiling and publishing the survey results and providing other creative avenues for youth voice to be heard and acted upon by decision makers.

### **Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™)**

The goals of the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP™) are to reduce recidivism of juvenile offenders, increase public safety, and eliminate costs for services that do not work. Additional long-term positive effects are improved family and peer relations, alleviated mental health symptoms, and

consistent school attendance by ensuring that ***the right youth receive the right service at the right time.***

The Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP) in the Department of Human Rights has coordinated the activities. The SPEP™ diagnostic tool assesses the likely effectiveness of services in terms of recidivism reduction by examining four domains:

- Service Type
- Amount of Service
- Quality of Service
- Risk Level of Youth

Service providers receive a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) at initial and subsequent scorings with recommendations related to recidivism reduction. Services are intended to be rescored to assess performance no more frequently than 18-month intervals. This allows for sufficient time to make programmatic changes, the results of which would then be reflected within future cohorts of youth receiving the service.

It has always been the intention to expand usage of the SPEP™ tool into all judicial districts and a two-part plan to broaden the usage of SPEP™ emerged.

- 1) CJJP has made participation in the SPEP™ process a requirement for any services receiving federal funding that passes through CJJP and is distributed to the judicial districts. This creates the potential for the SPEP™ to be present in all eight judicial districts, but on a smaller scale. CJJP will also target residential settings identified as either being prepared for or having a need for evaluation of their services and will continue to revisit services that have already been evaluated for ongoing re-evaluation.
- 2) The creation of a statewide service inventory with the assistance of Juvenile Court Services will allow all community-based services to be “SPEP™ ready” at all times. A similar inventory will be created for residential services as well, using information directly from providers and compiled and maintained by CJJP. Juvenile Court Services in the eight Judicial Districts and CJJP is in the process of finalizing the necessary information for the database and has also created a web application to facilitate access to the programmatic information about various services. This web application will allow users to search for services in a number of different ways (e.g. location, service type, provider name, population served, etc.).

System officials will be able to utilize aggregate and individual results from the service inventory to make more informed decisions about resources and services for justice-involved youth. They will also be better equipped to formalize statewide evidence-based practices and improve the overall functioning of the juvenile justice system. Additionally, organizations which provide these services will have access to a research-based tool and evaluation results which they can use to improve the services available to youth in terms of recidivism reduction.

A decision matrix has been developed with the purpose to act as a structure for juvenile court decision making, weighing youth risk to reoffend (including offense severity) as well as other relevant variables in order to assist system officials with determining the most appropriate level of supervision and type of services for youth, thereby reducing recidivism and improving outcomes.

The decision matrix is currently being piloted in Polk County and Johnson County Juvenile Courts. An advisory team continues to oversee the development and implementation of the matrix.

### **Iowa Youth Survey**

The Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) is a collaborative effort led by the Department of Public Health's Division of Behavioral Health with assistance by the following agencies:

- Department of Education,
- Department of Human Rights' Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning and Statistical Analysis Center, and
- Department of Human Services.

In the fall of 1999, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 students in 6th, 8th, and 11th grades across the state of Iowa answered questions about their attitudes and experiences regarding alcohol and other drug use and violence, and their perceptions of their peer, family, school, and neighborhood/community environments. In 2008, the survey was administered online for the first time.

IYS reports list responses to every survey question and provide total percentages and breakdowns by grade and gender. Thirty-four constructs within nine framework domains are included.

Reports are available in the following categories:

- State of Iowa
- Counties
- Judicial Districts
- Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Planning Regions
- Decategorization areas
- Department of Human Services Regions,
- School Districts.

2018 IYS reports are posted online at <https://iowayouthsurvey.idph.state.ia.us/>. Individual school district reports can be accessed by contacting the respective district. Also available online is the Iowa Youth Survey Trend Report. The survey was not given in 2020, due to COVID-19.

## **Family First Prevention Services Act**

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was signed into law on February 9, 2018. This Act reforms the federal child welfare financing streams (Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act) to provide services to families who are at risk of entering the child welfare system. Family First will restructure how the federal government spends money on child welfare to improve outcomes for children. It will prevent the need for removal by strengthening families with evidence-based family preservation services.

Family First shifts focus and resources from out-of-home placement to keeping families together and preventing children from entering foster care by allowing federal reimbursement for community-based services, such as mental health services, substance use treatment, and in-home parenting skill training.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) and Juvenile Court Services partnered in the development of the Family First plan, to ensure qualifying services for youth in the juvenile justice system were included in the plan.

Family First will allow funding to:

- Provide family reunification services for children in foster care and after their return home;
- Recruit and retain high-quality foster families;
- Address opioids and other substance abuse and provide services to prevent child maltreatment as a result of substance abuse;
- Provide supports for youth transitioning from care;
- Extend independent living services to assist former foster youth up to age 23 and extends eligibility for education and training vouchers for these youth to age 26.

## **V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS IN 2022**

Achieving a 95% graduation rate by 2020 was an ambitious target, that was not met. Between 2011 and 2020, the graduation rate has increased 3.5% to 91.8%. The ICYD Council is committed to focus attention and monitor progress toward this goal.

In addition, the ICYD Council will begin to strengthen the authentic youth engagement activity among the ICYD agencies by developing training materials for staff to be able to recruit and prepare youth for opportunities serving on councils, participating in meetings, and making presentations. These are the first steps of the *Opportunity Pathway* strategy.

The ICYD Council seeks support from the Iowa Legislature and Governor's Office to develop innovative ways to authentically engage youth and utilize their expertise and wisdom craft state policies on youth issues and providing resources needed to achieve this pathway.

Specific recommendations to support the ICYD Council are to:

- Support the ICYD Council in adopting the recommendations from *The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth* report from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (pages 22-24). The summary is at CJJP's website: [https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/4%20-%20Promise%20of%20Adolescence\\_2page\\_highlights.pdf](https://humanrights.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/media/4%20-%20Promise%20of%20Adolescence_2page_highlights.pdf). The downloadable book is at: <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/25388/the-promise-of-adolescence-realizing-opportunity-for-all-youth>
- Support the ICYD Council in developing new strategies to incorporate authentic youth engagement (AYE) and positive youth development principles into state-level policy and practice, which include training staff, and engaging youth on state boards and commissions, and creative ways to involve youth.
- Provide resources to support state-level youth opportunities and youth-led initiatives (e.g. State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, Achieving Maximum Potential, Iowa Youth Congress, and Youth Action Squads).
- Identifying new and better ways to provide services and supports to Iowa's youth and families by encouraging multi-agency approaches in the development of innovative strategies and to incorporate federal initiatives that will eliminate the educational achievement gap for underrepresented students.
- Provide resources to continue and expand evidence-based practices and programs as they are developed and identified.
- Provide resources for the continued review and study of services for youth, through the collection and analysis of data that provides information to determine the effectiveness of the services.
- Support the continued use of data and research in the development of strategies and actions.
- Continue to develop ways to share information among agencies to address issues affecting youth who receive services and supports from multiple agencies.
- Support the continued use of state agency staff time to implement activities that meet the goals of the ICYD Council.



## APPENDIX 1: GRADUATION RATE CALCULATION METHODOLOGY

The methodology to calculate Iowa's high school graduation rate requires that the graduating classes have statewide identification numbers for six years or longer. With this identification system, Iowa can follow the same group of students over several years and implement the first-time freshman cohort rates (students who repeated their freshmen year were not included in the cohort). Below, the methodology is described for the four-year fixed cohort graduation rate and the five-year cohort graduation rate.<sup>11</sup>

### Four-year Graduation Rates

With the statewide identification system and Student Reporting in Iowa (SRI) data, Iowa can follow the same group of students over several years and implement the first-time freshman rates (students who repeated their 9th grade year were not included). The four-year graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students (denominator) who graduate with a regular high school diploma in four years or less by the number of first-time 9th graders enrolled minus the number of students who transferred out plus the total number of students who transferred in.

### Iowa Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate = $(FG + TIG) / (F + TI - TO)$

FG - First time 9th grade students in fall four years ago and graduated within four years

TIG - Students who transferred in grades 9 to 12 and graduated in four consecutive school years

F - First time 9th grade students in fall four years ago

TI - Transferred in the first time 9th graders in grades 9 to 12

TO - Transfer out (including emigrates and deceased)

First-time freshmen and transferred-in students include: resident students attending a public school in the district; non-resident students open-enrolled in, whole-grade sharing in, or tuition in; and foreign students on Visa. Those excluded are: home-schooled and nonpublic schooled students; public school students enrolled in another district, but taking courses on a part-time basis; and foreign exchange students. Students receiving regular diplomas are included as graduates in the numerator. Early graduates are included in the original cohort. All students who take longer to graduate (including students with IEPs) are included in the denominator, but not in the numerator for the four-year rate.

### Five-year Graduation Rates

The five-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of students (denominator) who graduate with a regular high school diploma in five years or less by the number of first-time 9th graders enrolled minus the number of students who transferred out plus the total number of students who transferred in. The five-year cohort rate will maintain the same denominator as the previous year's four-year rate, simply adding students who graduate in the fifth year to the numerator.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://educateiowa.gov/graduation-rates-and-dropout-rates>

**Iowa Five Year Cohort Graduation Rate = (FG + TIG) / (F + TI - TO)**

FG - First time 9th grade students in fall five years ago and graduated in five years

TIG - Students who transferred in grades 9 to 12 and graduated in four consecutive school years

F - First time 9th grade students in fall five years ago

TI - Transferred in the first time 9th graders in grades 9 to 12

TO - Transfer out (including emigrates and deceased)

**Dropout Rates**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definitions used for dropouts include students who satisfy one or more of the following conditions:

- Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled as of Count Day of the current year or
- Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and left the school before the previous summer and
- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district-approved educational program; and
- Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
  - a. transfer to another public school district, private school, or state or district-approved educational program,
  - b. temporary school-recognized absence for suspension or illness,
  - c. death, or
  - d. move out of the state or leave the country

A student who has left the regular program to attend an adult program designed to earn a High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) or an adult high school diploma administered by a community college is considered a dropout. However, a student who enrolls in an alternative school or alternative program administered by a public school district is not considered a dropout.

The numerator of the dropout rate is the total number of dropouts in the school year for the grade span being calculated and the denominator is the total fall enrollment of grades for the grade span being calculated.

# Youth Empowerment Programs:

## Preparing Iowa Youth for the Future



Iowa Department of Human Rights

### OUR PROGRAMS

In 2020-2021, **114 Iowa youth** completed DHR Youth Empowerment Programs.

#### Iowa Youth Congress

Offers up to 100 high school youth the opportunity to gain hands-on education in government, democracy, advocacy, and civic engagement.

#### State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC)

A group of engaged Iowa youth ages 14-20, tasked with advising the Governor, General Assembly, and state and local policymakers on youth issues.

#### Youth Action Squad

A group of Iowa youth ages 14-24 with lived experience and interest in advocacy, designed to empower youth by providing opportunities for learning and leadership.

### OUR WORK

DHR Youth Development programs prepare young Iowans to **engage in their communities, develop 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills, and build relationships across the state.**

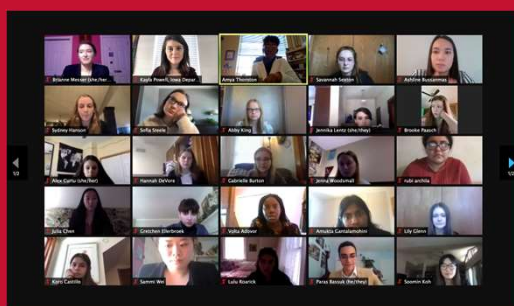
We partner *with* young people, and build relationships with leaders statewide, to engage young Iowans and help light the fire for public service. We believe the people closest to the problems are also those closest to the solutions, and we empower Iowa youth to be the **next generation of Iowa leadership.**

#### DHR youth program participants:

- ☐ conduct **research** to better understand the issues their communities face
- ☐ develop **public speaking and interpersonal skills**
- ☐ **work collaboratively** to accomplish goals
- ☐ polish their **writing and persuasive** talents
- ☐ Form **lasting relationships** with community leaders, policy-makers, and peers

# OUR YOUTH

DHR's Youth Empowerment Programs serve a diverse group of youth from across the state. We partner with schools, youth-serving agencies, and community leaders to find and support young people with an interest in government, policy, and developing as a leader.



## OUR RESULTS

### Civic Engagement

**100% of youth maintained or increased:**

- ☐ intention to vote
- ☐ interest in government
- ☐ understanding the opinions of others

**99% of youth maintained or increased:**

- ☐ knowledge of government issues
- ☐ asking others about issues
- ☐ changing one's mind based on new information
- ☐ expressing views to people in power.

### Youth Leadership

Youth who took an assessment of their Emotionally Intelligent Leadership abilities before and after participating in a DHR youth program reported increases in all facets of leadership:

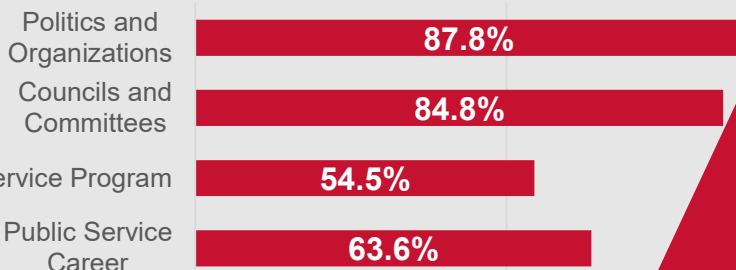
**Consciousness of Self**, the awareness of one's own abilities, emotions, perceptions: **+4.9%**

**Consciousness of Others**, the awareness of the abilities, emotions, or perceptions of others: **+6.1%**

**Consciousness of Context**, understanding how the environment and group affect the leadership process: **+7.5%**

### Career Pathways

**The vast majority of youth surveyed expressed interest in future service work:**



This year's youth program participants have already extended these skills into the workforce and education as:

AmeriCorps Members  
State employees  
Council and Committee members  
Scholarship recipients

# SIYAC 2021-2022 Priority Areas

Appendix 3



*The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council met in November to establish their priority areas for the year, dealing with Education, Environment, Health, Racial Equity, and Service.*

## Health

Working with schools and mental health organizations to improve mental health in Iowa schools and propose a position statement to introduce menstrual product availability into high schools.



## Environment

Increasing public awareness and promote small scale environmental change by sharing a position statement that supports increased elementary education around the environment and recycling.



## Education

Proposing a position statement to support the change of and innovation in the K-12 Education System and to invest in staff and student retention by investing in hands-on learning materials and project or opportunity based learning in classrooms.



## Service

Assisting in planning the group service project, help with individual service projects, and make service opportunities more available for youth.



## Racial Equity

Increasing public awareness on issues relating to racial equity by creating a podcast.



The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) was created by Iowa Code § 216A.140(8) under the Department of Human Rights (DHR)  
"to foster communication among a group of engaged youth and the governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families;  
and to advocate for youth on important issues affecting youth".

SIYAC focuses on service and volunteering, along with creating opportunities for youth to get involved in their communities. All state bills pertaining to youth are also reviewed and discussed by the council.  
We encourage you to reach out for a youth perspective.

For more information, please contact the SIYAC Coordinator, Brianna Deason, at [brianna.deason@iowa.gov](mailto:brianna.deason@iowa.gov)  
<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/cas/siyac> | 321 E. 12th Street Lucas State Office Building, 2nd Floor  
Des Moines, IA, 50319





Iowa Youth Congress (IYC) finalized its legislative agenda during Mock Congress in November 2021. This year, Iowa Youth Congress is focusing on the following four priority areas: Education, Environment, Student Voice, and Equity.

Appendix 4

# IYC 2021-2022 Legislative Agenda

## Education



**Mental Health Curriculum** – Require mental health education for students in grades 5-12 to be implemented through Iowa's districts and school Boards of Education.

**Sexual Violence Prevention and Awareness** – Incorporate the addition of sexual violence awareness and prevention into the current K-12 sexual education curriculum.

## Equity



**Disability Education** – Require additional training for educators to better identify, assist, and collaborate with students to accommodate any mental disabilities.

**Subsidizing Activities** – Expand the Student Activity Fund by providing money to school districts specifically to subsidize approved extracurricular activities.

## Environment



**School Recycling Plan** – Reorder recycling in Iowa schools to emphasize the importance of proper waste management methods, and allocating funding and guidelines to do so.

## Student Voice



**Student Representation** – Require all Iowa schools to allow a minimum of one non-voting student member on school boards throughout Iowa to increase student voice and transparency in schools.

IYC was created by the Department of Human Rights (DHR) to enhance opportunity and broader representation of all Iowans in the government process. IYC provides youth of all backgrounds the opportunity to gain hands-on education in the subject areas of state government, democracy, advocacy, and civic engagement. IYC provides students the knowledge, abilities, and direction to advocate and enact change in their communities and at the state level for issues affecting youth.

For more information, please contact the IYC Coordinator, Brianne Messer, at: [brianne.messer@iowa.gov](mailto:brianne.messer@iowa.gov)  
<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/iowa-youth-congress> | 321 E. 12th Street,  
Lucas State Office Building, 2nd Floor, Des Moines, IA 50319



The Iowa DHR's Youth Action Squads (YAS) are groups of 25 youth focusing on improving Racial Justice and COVID-19 around the state of Iowa through Action Plans.

Appendix 5

## Racial Justice Action Agenda

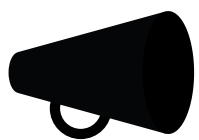


**Anti-Racist Schools:** Our schools will teach, enforce and encourage students and staff to be actively anti-racist through a newly reformed curriculum and a variety of after school clubs and activities.

**School Bullying:** All students will value and protect each other from bullying and know how to deal with it productively. Teachers will protect students and stop bullying at its early stages.

**Indigenous Education:** My future children will go to school and have their Indigenous culture and history (the real history) be taught. Others will respect and honor the Indigenous culture.

**Dismantling Oppressive Systems:** We envision the collective liberation of Des Moines Public School students by dismantling oppressive systems.



**Expressing Emotions:** Students will feel like they can express their emotions without making assumptions or overstepping boundaries.

**Journalism:** Prospective students of color can seek opportunities and connections in the newsroom.

**Art Activism:** Through art activism, we can open others' eyes to ethnic diversity in a way that is inviting and aesthetically pleasing.



**Asian Americans:** All students and members of the Asian American community will have a space to feel safe and to be treated as equals.

The Youth Action Squad (YAS) is designed to include a diversity of youth voices in the decision-making process in the state of Iowa. For the 2020-2021 session, there are two Youth Action Squads: COVID-19 and Racial Justice. The squads are made up of Iowa youth between the ages of 14-24 with lived experience in the issue areas and an interest in advocacy. YAS members will learn leadership skills, conduct research to gain an in-depth understanding of the problem, and create an action plan to address the problem in their communities or statewide.

# YAS Racial Justice 2020-2021 Action Agenda



The Iowa DHR's Youth Action Squads (YAS) are groups of 25 youth focusing on improving Racial Justice and COVID-19 around the state of Iowa through Action Plans.

## COVID-19 Action Agenda



**Education Clubs:** Students in our schools will gain a better understanding of the pandemic and other social injustice issues through education clubs.

**Online Education:** All students will have high quality online education.

**Virtual Learning:** Online learning becomes a more viable way for students to learn during the pandemic and students will feel they are still being successful during these unprecedented times.



**Health Resources:** Iowa Hospital's will have enough COVID-19 related equipment to protect staff and the spread of covid. Staff will also be paid enough.

**Trusting Science:** All people will understand why we should be trusting science/medical professionals instead of politicians and will take this virus seriously, so we can get back to a more normal life.

**Mental Health:** Mental health in teenagers has plummeted due to social isolation resulting from COVID-19. Therefore, more mental health resources will be offered in order for students to be able to safely reach out to friends and/or get the help they need.



**Mask Mandate:** Iowa will have a reinforced mask mandate to lower COVID-19 cases and deaths caused by COVID-19.

The Youth Action Squad (YAS) is designed to include a diversity of youth voices in the decision-making process in the state of Iowa. For the 2020-2021 session, there are two Youth Action Squads: COVID-19 and Racial Justice. The squads are made up of Iowa youth between the ages of 14-24 with lived experience in the issue areas and an interest in advocacy. YAS members will learn leadership skills, conduct research to gain an in-depth understanding of the problem, and create an action plan to address the problem in their communities or statewide.

# YAS COVID-19 2020-2021 Action Agenda





# Iowa National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

## Cohort 3 Comparisons

Appendix 6

The following chart showcases the outcomes of youth in Cohort 3 as they transitioned out of foster care and into adulthood. National comparison data is used to compare outcomes at age 21.

NYTD YOUTH OUTCOMES	AGE 17 (N=350)	AGE 19 (N=124)	AGE 21 (N=130)	AGE 21 NATIONAL COHORT*
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent reporting being employed	26%	62%	60%	55%
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent employed full-time	2%	30%	34%	33%
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent employed part-time	25%	32%	26%	26%
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent receiving employment-related skills training	24%	15%	17%	31%
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent receiving Social Security payments	16%	15%	13%	11%
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent receiving educational financial aid	1%	16%	13%	16%
<b>Financial Self-Sufficiency</b> Percent receiving public assistance (food, housing, and/or financial)	N/A	31%	33%	31%
<b>Educational Attainment</b> Currently enrolled in high school, GED classes, post-secondary classes or college	96%	37%	19%	24%
<b>Educational Attainment</b> Obtained high school diploma/GED	4%	67%	78%	69%
<b>Educational Attainment</b> Received vocational certificate/license, associate's or bachelor's degree	<1%	<1%	4%	7%
<b>Positive Connections with Adults</b> Has at least one adult to go to for support	98%	95%	92%	87%
<b>Homelessness</b> Experienced homelessness	23% (in lifetime)	22% (past two years)	30% (past two years)	27% (past two years)
<b>Access to Health Insurance</b> Currently on Medicaid	75%	70%	79%	69%
<b>Access to Health Insurance</b> Has health insurance other than Medicaid	23%	19%	13%	17%

\*FFY2021 Source: FFY2021 Iowa National Youth in Transition Database Annual Report: Survey Results for 21-Year-Olds

\*National Source: NYTD Data Brief #7 (November 2019); Highlights from the NYTD Survey: Outcomes Reported by Young People at Ages 17, 19 and 21 (Cohort 2)



# Iowa National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

## Cohort 3 Comparisons

The following chart showcases the outcomes of youth in Cohort 3 as they transitioned out of foster care and into adulthood. National comparison data is used to compare outcomes at age 21.

NYTD YOUTH OUTCOMES	AGE 17 (N=350)	AGE 19 (N=124)	AGE 21 (N=130)	AGE 21 NATIONAL COHORT*
<b>High-Risk Behaviors</b> Referred for substance abuse assessment or counseling (lifetime at age 17, in past two years for age 19 and 21)	<b>37%</b> (in lifetime)	<b>19%</b> (past two years)	<b>12%</b> (past two years)	<b>11%</b>
<b>High-Risk Behaviors</b> Received Mental Health Counseling (lifetime at age 17, in past two years for age 19 and 21)	<b>N/A</b>	<b>58%</b> (past two years)	<b>45%</b> (past two years)	<b>N/A</b>
<b>High-Risk Behaviors</b> Experienced Incarceration (lifetime at age 17, in past two years for age 19 and 21)	<b>54%</b> (in lifetime)	<b>27%</b> (past two years)	<b>25%</b> (past two years)	<b>20%</b>
<b>High-Risk Behaviors</b> Had Children (lifetime at age 17, in past two years for age 19 and 21)	<b>7%</b> (in lifetime)	<b>12%</b> (past two years)	<b>25%</b> (past two years)	<b>22%</b>
<b>High-Risk Behaviors</b> Ever given birth (lifetime at age 17, in past two years for age 19 and 21)	<b>4%</b> (in lifetime)	<b>8%</b> (past two years)	<b>14%</b> (past two years)	<b>N/A</b>
<b>High-Risk Behaviors</b> Ever fathered a child (lifetime at age 17, in past two years for age 19 and 21)	<b>3%</b> (in lifetime)	<b>4%</b> (past two years)	<b>11%</b> (past two years)	<b>N/A</b>

\*FFY2021 Source: FFY2021 Iowa National Youth in Transition Database Annual Report: Survey Results for 21-Year-Olds

\*National Source: NYTD Data Brief #7 (November 2019); Highlights from the NYTD Survey: Outcomes Reported by Young People at Ages 17, 19 and 21 (Cohort 2)