

# Protecting Iowa's Children

## The Child Protective Services Landscape in Iowa



- Child Protective Services (CPS) cases have increased in volume and complexity in the last several years.
- This means Iowa families and children are experiencing extended child welfare assessments, longer stays in foster care, as well as delayed reunification for families.



- Partnerships that are essential to successful outcomes in CPS cases are suffering.
- Our court communications and reports are delayed, and foster parents are not getting the devoted time and resources they need from our team.



- Time spent with children and families is a measure of success in our system.
- Despite our best efforts and passionate workforce - we are failing to meet the federal benchmark.

## Are children and families better off because HHS is involved?



In response to our two year assessment with CIA, the legislature appropriated funding in 2023 to support the child welfare workforce.

### Completed Initiatives



- Beginning September 28, 2023 all eligible Social Worker II (SWCM), Social Worker III (CPW) and Supervisor staff were offered a one-time \$5,000 retention bonus.
- New staff were offered a one-time recruitment bonus of \$2,500.
- Staff had to agree to stay with HHS CPS for 12 months following payment.



- On December 1, 2023, announced the hire of one Social Worker IV in each service area to help manage complex cases.

### In Process



- Reclassify the Social Worker II (SWCM) pay baseline to be in line with the Social Worker III (CPW) pay baseline.

Our assessment identifies key areas of focus that will transform the Child Welfare system in Iowa and improve outcomes for Iowa's children and families.

### **Focus on Prevention**

- Increase prevention efforts to support families before Child Protective Services gets involved.
- Establish a prevention and support line, as an alternative to intake (hotline) referrals.
- Implement a closed-loop referral system to better send and receive referrals between services and ensure an appropriate resolution.
- Narrow the use of CINA as an entry pathway and enhance the availability of community-based resources for mental health and behavioral services to support post-adoptive supports.

### **Support Relative Kin and Foster Parents**

- Increase financial support to relative kin and foster parents.
- Develop expedited and separate licensing standards for relative or kinship foster family homes.
- Remove barriers to providing the engagement and services needed to move cases to safe closure.

### **Increase System Efficiencies**

- Support consistent process during intake with standardized decision making protocol.
- Elevate complex cases to the correct level of leadership.
- Tailor documentation to families' needs.
- Improve communication with our court and community partners.

### **Eliminate Barriers to Engagement and Services**

- Assure children are receiving the correct level of care for the correct amount of time.
- Allow for supervision flexibility in the Family Centered Services contract, based on risk and need.
- Make services available to families as soon as possible (within a minimum of 5 days), rather than upon completion of a child abuse assessment.
- Consider a pathway for volunteers to support Child Welfare.
- Expand Tribal Agreements beyond Meskwaki to other tribes along the border.
- Increase social worker engagement with children and families who have higher needs.

### **Support Child Welfare Staff**

- Establish a mentoring program with clear goals and outcomes and provide financial stipends for mentors.
- Reduce the supervisor to worker ratio to improve quality of work and turnover rate.
- Continued focus on workforce retention and recruitment.
- Reduce documentation duplications to increase efficiencies.
- Standardize and prioritize training on the new child welfare computer system: VISION

To view the full report, use the QR code or url below and click on the "Child Protective Services Data and Reports" expandable tab.

<https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/CPS>

