

2023 CHILD WELFARE BY THE NUMBERS

Child abuse definitions: [Child Abuse Statistics | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

Assessment data and findings:

- 32,857 assessments for child abuse or neglect in calendar year 2023
 - 6,244 (19%) family assessments were conducted
 - Family assessments involved 7,980 unique children
 - 26,613 (81%) child abuse assessments were conducted
 - 18,674 (70%) of child abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “not confirmed”
 - Not confirmed child abuse assessments involved 18,239 unique children
 - 1,459 (6%) of child abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “confirmed” abuse
 - “Confirmed” abuse means that the abuse was minor and isolated and not likely to re-occur; and the perpetrator is not placed on the child abuse registry
 - Confirmed child abuse assessments involved 1,828 unique children
 - 6,480 (24%) of child abuse assessments resulted in a finding of “founded” abuse
 - Founded child abuse assessments involved 8,632 unique children
- Of the total number of abused or neglected children, 4,822 (46%) were 5 years of age or younger, 2,686 (26%) were between 6-10 years, and the remaining 2,951 (28%) were older than 11 years.
- Of all substantiated child abuse or neglect:
 - 59% was neglect (denial of critical care)
 - 20% was dangerous substance
 - 9% was presence of illegal drugs in a child’s body
 - 7% was physical abuse
 - 4% was sexual abuse
 - The categories of allows access by a registered sex offender, allows access to obscene materials, mental injury, child sex trafficking, prostitution of a child, and bestiality in the presence of a minor each made up less than 1% of the total substantiated child abuse or neglect

Allegations of abuse and neglect are evaluated by a central intake unit in Des Moines. The intake is accepted if there is reasonable belief the information constitutes an allegation of child abuse as defined by Iowa Code. Accepted intakes are assessed in person by county-based HHS child protection workers. Most allegations are not confirmed, as indicated in the data above and as aligned with National data. Most families that do not qualify for formal HHS services are eligible for non-agency voluntary services. When abuse is founded or confirmed with high risk, HHS case managers supervise ongoing services for children and their families. Those services are performed by non-governmental social service organizations under performance-based contract.

Average Caseloads:

- 223 HHS child protective workers were assigned an average of 13 cases a month, including cases alleging adult abuse.
- 351 HHS case managers had an average child welfare caseload of 21. In addition to supervising child welfare services, workers attempt to visit every child and their parent every month.

Strategies and Results of Iowa's Child Welfare System:

- Use consistent best-practice assessment of risk and safety.
- Pursue permanency and family connections for at-risk children.
- Reduce racial disparities. Gap is narrowing for both African American and Native American families.
- Engage families in plan for improvement, especially via solution focused meetings and parent partners.
- Focus on best-practice results (lowering rates of re-abuse, children have permanency and stability, etc.)
- Provide performance-based contracts aligned with safety and permanency outcomes for families. Iowa transitioned to Family-Centered Services (FCS) contracts to align with Family First legislation beginning July 1, 2020.

- Results for January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023 under the FCS contracts include:
 - Non-Agency Voluntary Services
 - 99.80% of families referred for Non-Agency Voluntary Services safely maintained the children within their own home during the case.
 - Family Preservation Services (Results for January 1, 2023 through November 30, 2023- time frame limited due to data availability)
 - 89.96% of children were not removed from their homes during provision of Family Preservation Services.
 - Agency Solution Based Casework (SBC)
 - 91.62% of families referred for services safely maintained the children within their own home or with kin/fictive kin caregivers during the case.

The Cost of Child Welfare FY23 Actual Expenditure:

Major Services	State Dollars*	Other Dollars*	Total*	Average Monthly Number Served – FY23
Family Centered Services	\$4.9	\$39.3	\$44.2	4,205 families served (at least one child per family)
Family Foster Care	\$7.4	\$4.6	\$12	1,376 children in licensed foster care
Group Care	\$28.9	\$0.3	\$29.2	297 children in highly structured group settings
Adoption Subsidies	\$30.8	\$46.2	\$77	9,935 subsidies paid until adopted child reaches 18
Aged-Out Program	\$0.6	\$2.8	\$3.4	345 aged-out youth receiving stipends, counseling
Shelter Care	\$6.8	\$0.1	\$6.9	110 children served in average month
HHS Social Workers	\$35.9	\$38.2	\$74.1	