



Health and Human Services

Healthy Iowans Newsletter

Iowa's State Health Assessment (SHA) and State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)

As one of Healthy Iowans' [Partners in Action](#), the [State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council](#) (SIYAC) has dedicated efforts and advocacy for mental health and improved access to care for Iowa's youth as well as food security activities that play a vital role in advancing the goals of the [2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan](#). SIYAC provides an important avenue for youth engagement on issues impacting youth in Iowa, ensuring youth voices are heard where decisions are made.

Iowa is one of the few states with a youth advisory council required by law. This council, consisting of 21 youth members ages 14-20, is tasked with educating the Governor, General assembly and state and local policy makers on issues impacting youth. SIYAC creates [annual position statements](#) that outline legislative solutions for issues affecting youth. For example, in the 2025 legislative session, SIYAC authored a position statement related to mental health that was introduced as legislative bill [SF100](#) and [HF223](#): Mandates schools to publish mental health resources on school websites and collaborate with students to improve awareness.



State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council members

What Does SIYAC Do?

SIYAC members meet monthly to collaborate on projects, advise various policymakers, conduct service projects, and discuss committee updates. Every two years, they administer an annual survey to identify the top concerns of youth in Iowa. Based on the latest findings, members are currently focused on:

- Community Engagement
- Education

- Environment
- Mental Health
- Youth Policy

Each committee develops advocacy, service and public awareness strategies to address these priorities. In addition, SIYAC members complete both a group service project and an individual service project each year to make a direct impact in their communities.

Five More Ways SIYAC is Making an Impact

1. Reducing Food Waste - Created a [Food Waste Guide](#) to help schools manage and recycle food waste more effectively
2. Expanding STEM Opportunities - Advocating for the availability of STEM kits in public libraries to ignite an early interest in science and technology
3. Improving Access to Services - Developing a “how to” resource for youth providers to improve the accessibility of services for youth
4. Youth Shadow Week - SIYAC members shadowed state leaders, including Attorney General Brenna Bird, Secretary of State Paul Pate, Health & Human Services Director Kelly Garcia, and legislators, gaining insights into day-to-day government operations and highlighting the importance of engaging youth in decision-making
5. Giving Back - SIYAC members donated 98 pounds of food to a local food bank during their winter meeting



(Pictured above is Attorney General Brenna Bird and SIYAC members Aleena Wittenburg and Hailey Schaack)

What's Next?

SIYAC isn't stopping here! The council is actively seeking new ways for state government to partner with youth and is working on official recommendations to expand youth engagement across agencies. They are particularly focused on establishing youth representative positions on different Boards and Commissions. In upcoming meetings, they plan to explore how they can participate in statewide efforts related to homelessness and violence prevention. Additionally, they are gearing up to co-present at several conferences and events.

Get Involved: Call to Action for Adults

- Know a passionate young leader? Encourage them to apply for SIYAC! Applications for the 2025-2027 SIYAC term are now open. Iowa youth ages 14-20 can find the [application](#) on the [SIYAC website](#) or any Iowa HHS social media account.
- If you are a local or state policymaker or community leader, consider partnering with SIYAC to enhance youth engagement in decision-making.
- Help share out their [resources](#)! If you know individuals or organizations that could benefit from the resources developed by SIYAC, please share them.
- Support their advocacy by talking to legislators about the significance of supporting SIYAC's initiatives and the positive impact they can have on youth in Iowa.

Questions? Contact Kayla Powell, Office of Youth and Family Engagement Coordinator, 515-343-6412, kayla.powell@hhs.iowa.gov

Trainings and Events

Healthiest State Conference

- “Designed for HR professionals, wellness coordinators, and organizational leaders, the conference offers educational opportunities to advance workplace and community well-being. Attendees will gain insights into the latest wellness initiatives, connect with industry professionals, and access tools to drive meaningful change.”
- Hosted by Healthiest State Initiative
- Wednesday, April 16 at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny, IA

Public Health Leadership Webinar

- “This training provides an overview of leadership, leadership types, theory and the distinction between leadership and management. Targeted to public health professionals, it will provide specifics on public health leadership, diversity in leadership, and leadership during crisis.”
- Hosted by Mid-Atlantic Regional Public Health Training Center
- Tuesday, April 22, 1-2pm CTE

35th Annual Iowa Breastfeeding Conference

- “Join the 35th Annual Iowa Breastfeeding Conference for evidence-based care, education and support for breastfeeding parents and their families.”
- Hosted by UnityPoint Health
- Wednesday, May 14th & Thursday, May 15th at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny, IA

News and Resources

Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) has created a series of detailed snapshots highlighting women's health in Iowa. These reports provide data on how various health issues currently impact this population, along with an overview of the actions HHS is taking to address each concern.

- [Iowa Women's Health Snapshot: Cancer](#)
- [Iowa Women's Health Snapshot: Obesity](#)
- [Iowa Women's Health Snapshot: Maternal Health Workforce](#)

The [Iowa Food System Coalition](#) has launched a new podcast exploring the future of food and farming in Iowa - [At the Farm Table Podcast](#).

- Listen wherever you get your podcasts or on the Iowa Food System Coalition's new [Substack page](#)

The [2025 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Report](#) has been released.

- The [annual data release](#) provides a revealing snapshot of how health is influenced by where we live, learn, work, and play. The snapshots provide communities a starting point to investigate where to make the change.

Every day at HHS, we work to improve the lives of our fellow Iowans. As an agency it is important to keep focused on our mission; to help Iowans achieve healthy, safe, stable, and self-sufficient lives through the programs and services we provide.

For more information, please contact:
healthyiowans@hhs.iowa.gov



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