

Iowa Commission on the  
Status of African-Americans  
Department of Human Rights

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Strategic Plan  
2004

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The Commission on the Status of African-Americans, formerly known as the Commission on the Status of Blacks, was created by statute in 1988. The nine members of the commission are appointed by the Governor and represent each region of the State where there is a significant African-American population. Meetings are open to the public. The commission sets policy for and provides direction to the Division of the Status of African-Americans within the Department of Human Rights. The division administrator is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate.

**Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans  
2003-04 Members**

BEVERLY ALLEN	Des Moines	term expires 2004
GEORGE CURTIS BAUGH	Pella	term expires 2006
DEBORAH BERRY	Waterloo	term expires 2006
THERESA CLARK-KLINE	Fort Madison	term expires 2004
JAMIE HOWARD	Davenport	term expires 2004
ISAIAH "IKE" JOHNSON	Denison	term expires 2006
JOSEPH MCGILL, JR.	Cedar Rapids	term expires 2004
JEROME THOMAS	Dubuque	term expires 2004
ROBERT TYSON	Waterloo	term expires 2005

Ex-officio Member  
 Vacant, Director  
 Department of Human Rights

**Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans  
2003-04 Staff**

RUTH E. WHITE, PH.D.	Administrator	appointed June 2002
KIMBERLY CHEEKS	Program Planner	joined staff in September 1997

## **ICSAA Mission**

The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans pursuant to Chapter 216A.142 of the Iowa Code is legislatively mandated to report on the status of Iowans of African-American descent. The Commission, with the support of staff, community leaders, public and private agencies and organizations, will consider, review, and recommend programs, services, policies, legislation and administrative rules that will improve the quality of life for Iowa's African-American population.

## **ICSAA Vision Statement**

The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans exists to promote the interests of African-Americans in the State of Iowa and in doing so, fosters the well being of the State's entire citizenry.

In the spirit of equity, inclusion and responsiveness this Commission, in partnership with the broader African-American community shall:

Educate itself and others regarding the needs of the state's African-American citizenry and regarding the issues that significantly impact them.

Inform the broader African-American community, legislative branches of government and the general public of those needs and issues.

Advocate for positive changes in policy, practices and programs that potentially or actually negatively affect African-American Iowans.

Network with organizations and individuals on behalf of the state's African-American population.

## **Director's Comments**

The Division on the Status of African Americans sits in a precarious balance between a disheartened constituency and a disinterested legislature. The agency faces challenges not unlike those faced by every other division and department in present day state government--those created by monumental tasks, unrealistic expectations, and dwindling funding. In the face of unprecedented negative statistics in the areas of education, health, unemployment and criminality, the tasks of the Division on the Status of African Americans continue to focus in improvement of the lives of the state's African American citizens through: providing them with information which will enhance their ability to engage in wise decision making for themselves; advocating for them, so that they can expect equity of legal and social treatment; and networking with like-minded individuals, agencies, organizations, and corporations, in their behalf.

Given the high ranking of Iowa's overall educational system, the increase in standardized test scores, the level of enrollment in core and advanced curricula, and the high rate of graduation, disaggregation of statistics in these areas (as documented in the Annual Condition of Education Report for 2002) by race and ethnicity reveals stark and disheartening disparities. While there are no pat answers to the questions that arise when one asks why students of color excel less in a state that is lauded for its educational achievement, what becomes clear is that the absence of educational achievement severely curtails choices and opportunities, and effects every aspect of life beyond high school.

Because of the clear connection between educational achievement and health; between educational achievement and involvement in the criminal justice system; between educational achievement and employment opportunities, the Commission on the Status of African Americans feels that it would be negligent not to make educational achievement the primary focus of its current efforts. It is not our intention to ignore the other huge areas of concern, but to acknowledge the futility of attending to them without strong simultaneous attention to education.

This emphasis is in keeping with the Iowa Code, Administrative Rules, the Division's Mission and vision Statements, as well as the Governor and Lt. Governor's new Leadership agenda.

## **Core Functions**

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### **Education, Communication, Collaboration**

The desired end result of the efforts of this division is to effect positive change in the black community. Education, Communication and Collaboration are necessary components to the accomplishment of that goal, and are delineated in the Commission's Vision Statement.

#### ***EDUCATION:***

Foremost, we plan to expand efforts toward the academic improvement of African American students. We will also work in other areas impacted positively by education, and negatively by its absence. Examples include health choices, economic issues, and encounters with the justice system.

#### ***COMMUNICATION:***

We will work to develop the positive public image which emanates from widespread and frequent interaction with constituents. Equally important is the ability to communicate effectively with legislators.

#### ***COLLABORATION:***

We are also cognizant of the need to work together with agencies, divisions, and organizations whose goals intersect with those of the Division on the Status of African Americans.

## Assessment

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**The Director of the Commission on the Status of African Americans, along with the Program Planner, and the Commission's vice chair have constructed the following list of strengths, limitations, opportunities and threats which constitute our internal/external assessment. These factors impact our mission and vision, as well as our goals and strategies.**

### ***Strengths:***

- A small committed and professional staff.  
The *Program Planner* has longevity on the job, and brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to it.  
The *Director*, while still a novice, is committed, and has a long history of effective work with issues relevant to African Americans.
- Nine dedicated Commissioners who have vision and are willing to lead.
- A new Administrator who offers leadership perspective and new direction for the department.
- Supportive co-workers.
- Sponsorship of the annual state wide Martin Luther King Day observance.
- Participation in other local and state-wide African American multi cultural initiatives.

### ***Limitations:***

- Inadequate funding.
- Long term vacancy at the administrative level.
- A two-person staff.
- The absence of resources to initiate grant searches and research.
- Uncertain public perception.
- Unrealistic public expectations.
- A history of short term leadership.
- Absence of consistency and long term planning.

### ***Opportunities:***

- Grant funding.
- Collaboration with other state agencies.
- Increased visibility and public awareness of the role of the Commission.
- Increased public and constituent awareness of positive aspects of African American heritage.
- Accurate data collection.

### ***Threats:***

- Budget cuts.
- Increasing profundity of negative issues.
- Perceptions of the agency as problem solver.
- Inconsistent community support.
- Shifting political climate.

## Goals, Strategies, and Measures

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### Goal 1:

As regards the k-16 public education system, to reduce the achievement disparity between African American students and students representative of the majority population. Concomitantly, to educate the public as well as the legislators as to the importance of cultural pro activity.

#### *Strategies:*

- The increase of parent /community involvement in the educational process.
- Increase in the recruitment and hiring of African American teachers and administrators.
- The drafting and implementation of substantive multi-cultural teaching materials for use in the classroom, k-16.
- Increase in and maintenance of teacher training programs (including student teaching) that include multi-cultural awareness components.
- Work toward the development of programs toward eliminating drop-outs.
- Work toward the development of programs to encourage consistent school attendance.
- Establishment of The Academy for Scholastic and Personal Success in representative school districts throughout the state.
- A focus on the strengths of African American culture.
- Evaluation of existing education legislation; SF 597, SF 2063 and HF 2272, relevant to African American educational achievement.
- Collaboration with and coordination of local task forces, committees, and consortia whose educational concerns are similar to those of the Commission.
- Presentations in public and legislative arenas as to the importance of cultural pro activity.

#### **Measures:**

The ratio of parents/guardians of African American students at Parent Conferences and other academically oriented educational events vs. those not involved.

The percentage of African American teachers of academic subjects.

The percentage of African American school administrators.

The ratio of school districts using multi-cultural curricula to those using standard curricula.

The percentage of school districts applying selected current legislation to their African American student populations vs. those not.

Willingness of legislators to support cultural initiatives.



**Goal 2:**

To increase awareness of the need for community education regarding health-related issues.

*Strategies:*

- Service on committees, boards, and task forces dedicated to working on minority health and substance abuse treatment issues.
- Dissemination of information on minority health care issues.
- Collaboration with other Divisions and state agencies on initiatives to effect minority health, specifically those relevant to the African American population.
- Use of the division and commissioners in public forums to educate/inform the community on minority health issues.

**Measures:**

The ratio of community health-related activities to non health-related activities.

The rate of dissemination of health-related information.

**Goal 3:**

Equality of treatment for African Americans by the justice system.

*Strategies:*

- Development of a community-based, culturally oriented youth group as a base for changing vision.
- Collaboration with the Divisions of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning, Latino Affairs, and Community Action Agency.
- Creation of a distribution list for dissemination of information relevant to areas of deficiency as well as areas of strength.
- Search for additional full-time or shared staff.
- Collaboration with local churches, schools, and community action agencies.
- Collaboration with the Division of Latino Affairs to re-submit a Racial Profiling Bill.

**Measures:**

Percentage of incarcerated youth.

Percentage of incarcerated adults.

Ratio of programs and initiatives oriented toward prevention vs. those oriented toward re-education of incarcerated youth or adults.

Ratio of youth accepting involvement in youth education opportunities vs. those who choose non-involvement.

Percentage of Iowa counties voluntarily collecting racial profiling data.

**Goal 4:**

Knowledge and awareness of the legislative process.

*Strategies:*

- Conversance with the Iowa Code.
- Commission meetings with selected legislators.
- Visibility at the Capitol during legislative sessions.
- Interaction and collaboration with similar-sized agencies as to their legislative activity.
- Review of information provided by the Legislative Service Bureau.
- Registration of Commissioners as lobbyists.
- Increased Commissioner activity in local political initiatives.

**Measures:**

Percentage of Commissioners who have read the Iowa Code.

Percentage of Commissioner awareness of legislative activity relevant to the concerns of African Americans.

Percentage of Commissioners registered as lobbyists.