



2019 UNITYPOINT HEALTH® CHILDREN'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Medicaid and hawk-i

Medicaid and hawk-i provide a critical safety net for the health and well-being of Iowa's children. Over half (55 percent) of the 618,000 Iowans enrolled in Medicaid and hawk-i are children, yet children account for only 20 percent of the Medicaid spending. These two programs cover the essential healthcare needs for two in five children in Iowa. In rural Iowa, 35 percent of all children are covered by Medicaid and hawk-i. Under Iowa's current Medicaid eligibility structure, combined with employer-based and individually purchased healthcare plans, 97 percent of Iowa children have healthcare coverage.

In comparison to uninsured children, those covered by Medicaid and hawk-i are more likely to:

- Have better health outcomes as adults
- Have better school attendance and academic achievement
- Graduate from high school and attend college
- Achieve economic success as an adult, such as increased wage earnings and contribution to the tax base

Policy Recommendation: Support innovative Medicaid policies that address the unique developmental needs of children, and protect children's healthcare coverage by opposing any Medicaid changes or cost containment measures that negatively impact children.

Iowa Poison Control Center (IPCC)

Poisoning is the leading cause of death due to an injury in the United States. The IPCC receives nearly 40,000 calls annually for immediate treatment advice and assistance for cases of exposure to poisonous or hazardous substances, as well as for drug and poison information. By providing 24/7 treatment advice over the phone and education, IPCC experts manage over 85 percent of the calls from the public entirely at home without the public ever having to visit the hospital. This results in annual net savings to Iowans of more than \$12.5 million. Forty-four percent of IPCC cases are from participants in the Medicaid program, saving the Iowa Medicaid Program \$5.5 million in avoided healthcare costs.

Legislative Request: Maintain the current \$500,000 state appropriation for the IPCC to provide state matching funds necessary to draw the maximum federal funding authorized under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Children's Mental Health

Mental health is an important part of overall health for children as well as adults. One in five children has a mental health disorder. One-fourth of lifelong cases of mental illness start by age 14. For a young person with symptoms of a mental illness, the earlier treatment is started, the more effective it can be. Yet 80 percent of children never receive mental health treatment. Barriers to accessing treatment impact all children in Iowa but especially children living in rural communities.

UnityPoint Health supports the development of a comprehensive, statewide children's mental health system that incorporates prevention, early identification and early intervention.

Policy Recommendations:

- Expand funding for programs such as First Five, a successful, evidence-based Maternal Child Health program model. Currently, only 11 counties in Iowa do not have First Five programs.
- Support the recommendations of the Children's Board to develop and implement a children's mental health system designed to support all Iowa children and their families.
- Establish a mechanism to coordinate and connect children's mental health funding streams across State departments to improve access to mental health services for all Iowa children.



Child Protection Center Grant Program

In 2017 in Iowa, 11,236 children were confirmed as having been abused by a parent or caregiver, a 26 percent increase from the previous year and the largest single year increase of abuse in the last two decades. Iowa's Child Protection Centers (CPCs) provide a nationally accredited service model to assess and treat the medical and emotional needs of these children. Through this multidisciplinary team approach, the CPCs served 3,804 children in FY 2018, with a proven savings of \$1,047 per case.

Legislative Request: Increase the state appropriation by \$250,000 for a total of \$1.908 million to expand the Child Protection Center Grant Program, to address the rising need for specialized medical evaluation and forensic interview expertise in the assessment of abused and neglected children in Iowa.

Legislative Request: Maintain level funding of \$50,000 to support the Child Protection Center Satellite Program in Mason City to improve access to a center of expertise for children in north central Iowa.

Improving Health & Mental Health Outcomes for Children in Foster Care

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has classified children in foster care as a population with special healthcare needs and recommends that children be seen early and more often to assess and treat the impact of trauma. Children and adolescents in foster care have a high prevalence of chronic medical, dental, mental health, developmental and educational issues.

Compared to children in the general population, youth in foster care are:

- Twice as likely to have a **learning disability or developmental delay**
- Twice as likely to have **asthma**
- Three times as likely to be diagnosed with **ADD/ADHD**
- Three times as likely to have a **hearing or vision problem**
- Five times as likely to experience **anxiety**
- Six times as likely to experience **behavioral problems**
- Seven times as likely to experience **depression**

Source: "Medical & Physical Health of Children in Foster Care," Turney & Wildeman, *Pediatrics* (November 2016)

Finding Solutions: Investing in Foster Care Centers of Excellence

Iowa's Foster Care Clinic model is derived from the nationally recognized Rees-Jones Center for Foster Care Excellence in Dallas, Texas. The public-private partnership model utilizes a multidisciplinary approach serving children of all ages who are placed outside of the home, whether in kinship care, foster care or a group care setting. The Foster Care Clinic offers both primary care/medical home and mental health services in one convenient location for children in or transitioning from foster care. Pediatric health and mental health experts at the centers have an understanding of Iowa's complex child welfare system and work with biological, foster and adoptive families to ensure children in foster care receive high quality, coordinated care to improve their long-term health outcomes and future success.

Legislative Request: Invest in a \$300,000 state appropriation for the establishment/support of up to three regional Foster Care Centers of Excellence to meet the medical, mental health and developmental needs of children in and transitioning from Iowa's foster care system.

