



Prevent Child Abuse Iowa™

Position on the proposed Iowa Health and Human Services Alignment

Earlier this year, the State of Iowa announced a planned Alignment between the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS). The two primary human services agencies in the state will soon become a single department, Health and Human Services. The Alignment is expected to begin in early 2022, with a full rollout of proposed changes in the months and years to come.

On November 15th, the Alignment Project Team released a preliminary proposal for how this Alignment will improve services to Iowans. The team is currently soliciting feedback from stakeholders on potential advantages and disadvantages of the proposed changes.

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa has carefully reviewed the plan and offers the following feedback and recommendations for the Alignment.



Focus on Prevention.

Prevention saves money, reduces harm, and improves outcomes for families. Each crisis that HHS responds to is a missed opportunity to prevent harm and trauma. The earlier we can identify and meet the needs of families in our state, the more we can reduce harmful impacts and costly treatments down the road. We recommend including responsive and protective services such as child welfare on a continuum of services as part of a public health framework.



Structure Around Families.

Families are stronger, and our efforts are more effective, when their unique strengths and needs are at the center of decision-making. Family voice should be authentically engaged at each stage of the alignment process, and leadership must be willing to make changes in response to family input. We support a framework for services that is family-centered and strengths-based, not focused on rigid processes or family deficits. This should start from the time the family accesses the system, with a single “front door” human navigator that a family can trust to connect them with the right service in the most effective way.



Strengthen Communities.

Communities are best served by a safe place to gather and build social supports for *all* families, not just those with urgent need. The focus of community-based supports should be on strengthening relationships and offering access to services in a dignified way that facilitates natural support networks. Resilient, connected, responsive communities are a crucial protective factor for Iowa children and families.



Invest in Iowa.

The vision of a simplified, effective Health and Human Services department cannot become a reality without an investment in the health and well-being of Iowans. Enhanced systems benefit families only when there is a strong network of effective supports waiting on the other side of the “front door.”

The Change Team wants to hear from YOU. To give your feedback about how the Alignment will affect your community, complete the form found [here](#). To learn more about the project, and to read the full change report, visit <https://hhsalignment.iowa.gov>.