

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Position Statement

NASW, Iowa Chapter, supports a comprehensive array of prevention and intervention services and supports to improve child safety and permanency, and to promote child and family well-being in instances where children have been or are at risk of being abused or neglected.

Recommendations

- *Differential response.* The Legislature should provide funding to enable an independent evaluation to ensure that implementation positively impacts child welfare outcomes related to safety, permanency and child and family well-being. While IDHS can provide administrative data to measure changes in some safety and permanency outcomes (e.g., repeat maltreatment and reunification), an independent evaluation would be better positioned to measure the extent to which changes in outcomes were actually the result of implementing differential response, and would be able to measure changes in child welfare outcomes for which IDHS does not collect administrative data (e.g., child well-being, parental satisfaction). Such an evaluation could be conducted by one of several national organizations, a university or a private organization based in Iowa. IDHS also should publish on a regular basis the data on the child welfare outcomes associated with cases assigned to the child abuse and family assessment pathways.
- *DHS Caseloads.* The Legislature should provide funding to reduce IDHS caseloads for child protective assessment workers and child welfare ongoing workers to bring them in line with national standards developed by the Child Welfare League of America in order to improve services provided to children and families, including frequency of worker visits with children and parents.
- *Foster & Adoptive Family Rates.* The Legislature should provide funding to increase foster and adoptive family rates to 65% of the USDA estimated cost to raise a child, as required in Section 234.38, Code of Iowa.
- *Child Welfare Provider Rates.* IDHS should implement the rate-setting methodology recommended by the Foster Group Care Rate Methodology Workgroup for all child welfare service providers, including a provision for annual cost of living increases.
- *Substance abuse.* The Legislature should provide the funding needed for statewide expansion of the key successful components of family treatment courts upon completion of the Judicial Department's plan. Funding should address needs identified within the court system, the IDHS and substance abuse treatment programs.
- *Disproportionality.* IDHS should routinely report child welfare data broken down by race and ethnicity, including county specific data.
- *Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.* IDHS should require that all child welfare workers take the 1-day training course related to working with LGBTQ youth in child welfare.
- *Subsidized Guardianship.* The Legislature should direct IDHS to file an amendment to add subsidized guardianship to the Title IV-E State Plan, and should provide state funds as necessary for the program. Subsidized guardianship should be available to children in foster care regardless of whether the guardian is a relative, the child is IV-E eligible, or the family has been receiving a foster care payment.

The full version of this statement with references can be found at <https://nasw-heartland.site-ym.com/?183>