

232.188 Decategorization of child welfare funding.

1. Decategorization of child welfare funding is intended to establish a system of delivering human services based upon client needs to replace a system based upon a multitude of categorical programs and funding sources, each with different service definitions and eligibility requirements. The purposes of decategorization include but are not limited to redirecting child welfare funding to services which are more preventive, family-centered, and community-based in order to reduce use of restrictive approaches which rely upon institutional, out-of-home, and out-of-community services.

2. In partnership with an interested county or group of counties which has demonstrated the commitment and involvement of the affected county department of human services, juvenile court system, and board of supervisors, the department shall develop agreements providing for the decategorization of specific state and state-federal funding categories into a child welfare funding pool for that county or group of counties. A decategorization agreement shall require the decategorization program to be implemented by a decategorization governance board. The decategorization governance board shall develop specific, quantifiable short-term and long-term plans for enhancing the county's or group of counties' family-centered and community-based services and reducing reliance upon out-of-community care. The affected service systems shall include child welfare and juvenile justice systems. A decategorization agreement may vary depending upon the approaches selected by the county or group of counties which shall be detailed in an annual child welfare services plan developed by the decategorization governance board. A decategorization governance board shall involve community representatives and county organizations in the development of the plan.

3. The child welfare funding pool shall be used by the county or group of counties to provide more flexible, individualized, family-centered, preventive, community-based, comprehensive, and coordinated service systems for children and families served in that area. The decategorization of the funding shall not limit the legal rights of those children and families to services, but shall provide more flexibility to the partnership county or counties in responding to individual and family needs.

4. In a decategorization agreement, the department and the county's or group of counties' decategorization governance board shall agree on all of the following items: the governance relationship between the department and the decategorization governance board; the respective areas of autonomy of the department and the board; the budgeting structure for the decategorization; and a method for resolving disputes between the department and the board. The decategorization agreement shall require the department and the decategorization governance board to agree upon a budget within sixty days of the date by which the group foster care budget targets are determined for departmental service areas under section 232.143 for the fiscal year to which the budget applies. The budget may later be modified to reflect new or changed circumstances.

5. The state shall provide incentives for a county or counties to participate in a decategorization agreement while maintaining an expectation that the service outcomes for children and families can be improved by the funding flexibility, and the redeployment of funding currently available for services within the system. Moneys in the child welfare funding pool established for a county or group of counties participating in a decategorization agreement which remain unobligated or unexpended at the end of a fiscal year shall remain available to the county or group of counties during the succeeding fiscal year to finance other child welfare service enhancements.

6. Initially the department shall work with the five counties previously authorized under law to enter into decategorization agreements with the state. At a minimum, any of those counties may elect to use funding for foster care, family-centered services, subsidized adoption, child care, local purchase of service, state juvenile institution care, juvenile detention, department direct services, and court-ordered services for juveniles in the child welfare fund established for that county.

7. The annual child welfare services plan developed by a decategorization governance board pursuant to

subsection 2 shall be submitted to the department and the Iowa empowerment board. In addition, the decategorization governance board shall submit an annual progress report to the department and the Iowa empowerment board which summarizes the progress made toward attaining the objectives contained in the plan. The progress report shall serve as an opportunity for information sharing and feedback.

8. A decategorization governance board shall coordinate the board's planning and budgeting activities with the community empowerment area board for the community empowerment area within which the decategorization county is located.

92 Acts, ch 1229, § 18; 98 Acts, ch 1206, §11, 20; 99 Acts, ch 111, §10; 99 Acts, ch 190, §16; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33; 2004 Acts, ch 1116, §14