

CHAPTER 256A

CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Referred to in [§256C.4](#), [273.2](#), [279.51](#)

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256A.1 Title.

[This chapter](#) shall be known as the “*Child Development Assistance Act*”.
[88 Acts, ch 1130, §2](#)

256A.2 Child development coordinating council established.

1. A child development coordinating council is established to promote the provision of child development services to at-risk three-year-old and four-year-old children. The council shall consist of the following members:

- a. The director of the department of education or the director’s designee.
- b. The director of health and human services or the director’s designee.
- c. An early childhood specialist of an area education agency selected by the area education agency administrators.
- d. The dean of the college of human sciences at Iowa state university of science and technology or the dean’s designee.
- e. The dean of the college of education from the university of northern Iowa or the dean’s designee.
- f. The professor and head of the department of pediatrics at the university of Iowa or the professor’s designee.
- g. A resident of this state who is a parent of a child who is or has been served by a federal head start program.

2. Staff assistance for the council shall be provided by the department of education. Members of the council shall be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred while engaged in their official duties and shall receive per diem compensation at the level authorized under [section 7E.6, subsection 1](#), paragraph “a”.

[88 Acts, ch 1130, §3](#); [89 Acts, ch 206, §7](#); [91 Acts, ch 109, §5, 6](#); [2007 Acts, ch 22, §58](#); [2020 Acts, ch 1022, §2](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §990](#)

256A.3 Duties of council.

The child development coordinating council shall:

1. Develop a definition of at-risk children for the purposes of [this chapter](#). The definition shall include income, family structure, the child’s level of development, and availability or accessibility for the child of a head start or other child care program as criteria.
2. Establish minimum guidelines for comprehensive early child development services for at-risk three-year- and four-year-old children. The guidelines shall reflect current research findings on the necessary components for cost-effective child development services.
3. At least biennially, develop an inventory of child development services provided to at-risk three-year- and four-year-old children in this state and identify the number of children receiving and not receiving these services, the types of programs under which the services are received, the degree to which each program meets the council’s minimum guidelines for a comprehensive program, and the reasons children not receiving the services are not being served. The council is not required to conduct independent research in developing the inventory, but shall determine information needs necessary to provide a more complete inventory.
4. Subject to the availability of funds appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose of providing child development services, award grants for programs that provide new or additional child development services to at-risk children.

a. In awarding program grants to an agency or individual, the council shall consider the following:

- (1) The quality of the staff and staff background in child development services.
- (2) The degree to which the program is or will be integrated with existing community resources and has the support of the local community.
- (3) The ability of the program to provide for child care in addition to child development services for families needing full-day child care.
- (4) A staff-to-children ratio within the guidelines established under [subsection 2](#), but not less than one staff member per eight children.
- (5) The degree to which the program involves and works with the parents, and includes home visits, instruction for parents on parenting skills, on enhancement of skills in providing for their children's learning and development, and the physical, mental, and emotional development of children, and experiential education.
- (6) The manner in which health, medical, dental, and nutrition services are incorporated into the program.
- (7) The degree to which the program complements existing programs and services for at-risk three-year-old and four-year-old children available in the area, including other child care services, services provided through the school district, and services available through area education agencies.
- (8) The degree to which the program can be monitored and evaluated to determine its ability to meet its goals.
- (9) The provision of transportation or other auxiliary services that may be necessary for families to participate in the program.
- (10) The provision of staff training and development, and staff compensation sufficient to assure continuity.

b. Program grants funded under [this subsection](#) may integrate children not meeting at-risk criteria into the program and shall establish a fee for participation in the program in the manner provided in [section 279.49](#), but grant funds shall not be used to pay the costs for those children.

c. Programs awarded grants under [this subsection](#) shall meet the national association for the education of young children program standards and accreditation criteria, the Iowa quality preschool program standards and criteria, or other approved program standards as determined by the department of education. Programs awarded grants prior to July 1, 2015, shall continue to be evaluated and assessed based on eligibility and award criteria established under rules adopted by the state board of education pursuant to [section 279.51](#) prior to June 30, 2015.

5. Encourage the submission of grant requests from all potential providers of child development services and shall be flexible in evaluating grants, recognizing that different types of programs may be suitable for different locations in the state.

a. Requests for grants must contain a procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of the program and accounting procedures for monitoring the expenditure of grant moneys.

b. The council shall seek to use performance-based measures to evaluate programs. Not more than five percent of any state funds appropriated for child development purposes may be used for administration and evaluation.

6. Annually, submit recommendations to the governor and the general assembly on the need for investment in child development services in the state.

7. Subject to a decision by the council to initiate the programs, develop criteria for and award grants under [section 279.51, subsection 2](#).

8. Encourage the establishment of programs that will enhance the skills of parents in parenting and in providing for the learning and development of their children.

[88 Acts, ch 1130, §4; 89 Acts, ch 135, §54, 55; 89 Acts, ch 206, §8, 9; 92 Acts, ch 1221, §3; 99 Acts, ch 192, §33; 2003 Acts, ch 108, §45; 2004 Acts, ch 1086, §53; 2010 Acts, ch 1069, §71; 2015 Acts, ch 140, §10, 58, 59; 2021 Acts, ch 62, §1](#)

Referred to in [§256.163, 279.51](#)

256A.4 Family support programs.

1. *a.* The board of directors of each school district may develop and offer a family support program which provides outreach and incentives for the voluntary participation of expectant parents and parents of children in the period of life from birth through age five, who reside within district boundaries, in educational family support experiences designed to assist parents in learning about the physical, mental, and emotional development of their children. A board may contract with another school district or public or private nonprofit agency for provision of the approved program or program site.

b. A family support program shall meet multicultural gender fair guidelines. The program shall encourage parents to be aware of practices that may affect equitable development of children. The program shall include parents in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. A program shall be designed to meet the needs of the residents of the participating district and may use unique approaches to provide for those needs. The goals of a family support program shall include but are not limited to the following:

(1) Family involvement as a key component of school improvement with an emphasis on communication and active family participation in family support programming.

(2) Family participation in the planning and decision-making process for the program and encouragement of long-term parental involvement in their children's education.

(3) Meeting the educational and developmental needs of expectant parents and parents of young children.

(4) Developmentally appropriate activities for children that include those skills necessary for adaptation to both the home and school environments.

2. The department of education shall develop guidelines for family support programs. Program components may include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

a. Instruction, techniques, and materials designed to educate parents about the physical, mental, character, and emotional development of children.

b. Instruction, techniques, and materials designed to enhance the skills of parents in assisting in their children's learning and development.

c. Assistance to parents about learning experiences for both children and parents.

d. Activities, such as developmental screenings, designed to detect children's physical, mental, emotional, or behavioral problems that may cause learning problems and referrals to appropriate agencies, authorities, or service providers.

e. Activities and materials designed to encourage parents' and children's self-esteem and to enhance parenting skills and both parents' and children's appreciation of the benefits of education.

f. Information on related community resources, programs, or activities.

g. Role modeling and mentoring techniques for families of children who meet one or more of the criteria established for the definition of at-risk children by the child development coordinating council.

3. Family support programs shall be provided by family support program educators who have completed a minimum of thirty clock hours of an approved family support preservice or in-service training program and meet one of the following requirements:

a. The family support program educator is licensed in elementary education, early childhood education, early childhood special education, home economics, or consumer and homemaking education, or is licensed or certified in occupational child care services and has demonstrated an ability to work with young children and their parents.

b. The family support program educator has achieved child development associate recognition in early childhood education, has completed programming in child development and nursing, and has demonstrated an ability to work with young children and their parents.

c. The family support program educator has completed sixty college credit hours and possesses two years of experience in a program working with young children and their parents.

d. The family support program educator possesses five years of experience in a program working with young children and their parents.

4. Each district shall maintain a separate account within the district budget for moneys

allocated for family support programs. A district may receive moneys from state and federal sources, and may solicit funds from private sources, for deposit into the account.

5. A district shall coordinate a family support program with district special education and career and technical education programs and with any related services or programs provided by other state, federal, or private nonprofit agencies.

[92 Acts, ch 1158, §4](#); [2001 Acts, ch 159, §4](#); [2003 Acts, ch 180, §8](#); [2010 Acts, ch 1061, §42](#); [2016 Acts, ch 1108, §35](#)

Legislative intent; [92 Acts, ch 1158, §1](#)

256A.5 District advisory committees.

1. The board of directors of a school district shall appoint an advisory committee for each family support program. The members shall include participating parents and members of the community which participates in the program, such as members of the district's local early childhood education committees and representatives of local businesses, service organizations, educators, head start educators, parents, private child care providers, county home extension economists, area education agencies, the school board, the community education advisory board, local social services organizations, the local board of health, public health care practitioners, maternal and child health care providers, and persons knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate learning and parent or family education programs. The committee shall be responsible for assessing current programs and services for expectant parents and parents of children who are less than six years of age. The committee shall also assist the board in developing, planning, and monitoring the program and shall submit any recommendations in a report to the board.

2. The child development coordinating council shall develop a resource directory of parent involvement programs to assist districts in planning family support programs.

[92 Acts, ch 1158, §5](#); [2021 Acts, ch 76, §150](#)