

CHAPTER 121  
EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA INITIATIVE  
[Prior to 6/14/23, see Early Childhood Iowa State Board[249] Ch 1]

**441—121.1(256I) Purpose.** This chapter establishes the early childhood Iowa initiative enacted by the general assembly.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

**441—121.2(256I) Scope of the rules.** The rules for the initiative are promulgated under Iowa Code section 256I.4. No rule shall, in any way, relieve a person affected by or subject to these rules, or any person affected by or subject to the rules promulgated by the early childhood Iowa initiative, from any duty under the laws of this state.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

**441—121.3(256I) Definitions.** For the purpose of these rules, the following definitions apply:

“*Alignment*” means state- and community-level efforts to integrate early care, health, and education systems and to enhance state and community partnerships through innovative approaches.

“*Assessment*” means to identify for children and their families all formal and informal supports, assets and resources, as well as gaps, in an early childhood Iowa area. An assessment includes communitywide data, statistics, and facts upon which to base decisions to develop a community plan and to identify priorities to reach the desired results.

“*Citizen representative*” means a member of an early childhood Iowa board who is not an elected official or a paid staff member of an agency whose services fall under the plan or purview of the area board either directly or indirectly.

“*Community partners*” means individuals, early childhood service providers, and staff of other programs or agencies that communicate, coordinate and collaborate with an area board.

“*Community plan*” means the local plan adopted by the area board following input from the community. The plan elements include a comprehensive analysis of needs, gaps, and strengths, and the goals, objectives and action steps to implement the plan in the early childhood Iowa area. The community plan is also referred to in Iowa Code chapter 256I as the school ready children grant plan.

“*Decategorization project*” means the decategorization of child welfare and juvenile justice funding project operated under Iowa Code section 232.188.

“*Department*” means the Iowa department of health and human services.

“*Designation*” means the status awarded by the state board to an early childhood Iowa area meeting the criteria established by the state board.

“*Early childhood Iowa area*” or “*area*” means a geographic area as defined by the local community and designated by the state board.

“*Early childhood Iowa area board*” or “*area board*” means the governing board for an early childhood Iowa area.

“*Early childhood Iowa fund*” means a fund created in the state treasury from which moneys are distributed to early childhood Iowa areas for the purpose of supporting children and their families.

“*Early childhood Iowa office*” means a state unit within the department to coordinate the early childhood Iowa initiative.

“*Early childhood Iowa state board*” or “*state board*” means the state of Iowa’s early childhood Iowa board as appointed by the governor that meets the membership criteria of citizens and state agency directors as voting members and legislators as nonvoting members.

“*Early childhood stakeholders alliance*” or “*early childhood Iowa stakeholders alliance*” means the early childhood stakeholders alliance created in Iowa Code chapter 256I.

“*Elected official*” means a member of a board or governing body elected through a public election.

“*Evidence-based*” means that a program has completed a randomized control trial conducted by an independent researcher and has demonstrated positive results for children and families. “Evidence-based” may also include research conducted by the program that has been published in a peer-reviewed journal that also demonstrates positive results for children and families. To be

evidence-based, the program must include stringent standards for program replication including standards for implementation and monitoring to ensure that the program is being operated with fidelity to the original model.

*“Family support programs”* includes group-based parent education or home visiting programs that are designed to strengthen protective factors, including parenting skills, increasing parental knowledge of child development, and increasing family functioning and problem solving skills.

*“First years first”* means a public-private partnership for early childhood in Iowa, which includes an account created in the early childhood Iowa fund under the authority of the department to be used for first years first.

*“Fiscal agent,”* as designated by an area board, means a public agency as defined in Iowa Code section 28E.2; a community action agency as defined in Iowa Code section 216A.91; a nonprofit corporation; or an area education agency as defined in Iowa Code chapter 273.

*“Funding sources”* means a comprehensive fiscal assessment of identified sources and amounts to support children zero through five years of age.

*“Home visitation”* means a strategy to deliver family support or parent education services. A home visit is a face-to-face visit with a family in the family’s home or other alternate location to facilitate meeting the family’s goals.

*“Indicator”* means a measure that indirectly quantifies the achievement of a result.

*“Members of the public”* means individuals who meet the definition of citizen representative on an area board.

*“Parent”* or *“grandparent”* or *“guardian”* means a parent or primary caregiver of a child from birth to kindergarten entry, including a grandparent, other relative of the child, or foster parent; or a noncustodial parent who has an ongoing relationship with, and at times provides physical care for, the child.

*“Performance measure”* means a measure that assesses a program, activity, or service.

*“Result”* means the effect desired for Iowans.

*“State agency”* means a department of the executive branch including, but not limited to, the departments of economic development, education, health and human services, and workforce development.

*“Technical assistance”* means an ongoing, systematic and interactive process that is designed to achieve results and that enables knowledge from research, policy and evidence-based practices to be shared in partnerships through a variety of strategies with specific groups, agencies, communities and other partners to use within their unique contexts.

*“Technical assistance team”* means the early childhood Iowa office and identified personnel from the state departments of economic development, education, health and human services, and workforce development that provide the day-to-day operational work of local- and state-level early childhood Iowa and support to the state board.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; ARC 3249C, IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

#### **441—121.4(256I) Early childhood Iowa state board responsibility.**

**121.4(1)** The state board shall provide leadership and coordination for the development of Iowa’s early care, health and education system in cooperation with area boards, community partners and other state agencies.

**121.4(2)** The state board shall:

*a.* Develop and implement a process for designating area boards. The state board shall review the process at the close of each designation cycle.

*b.* Adopt state-level indicators with input from area boards and the early childhood stakeholders alliance. The state board shall report on indicators each fiscal year and compare the data against baseline data and data from prior fiscal years as available. Indicators shall measure all result areas of the early care, health and education system.

*c.* Adopt minimum standards to promote equal access to services subject to the authority of the area boards.

*d.* Adopt guidelines and standards for services provided under a school ready children grant. All guidelines and standards shall be found in the online toolkit available on the official website of early childhood Iowa at [earlychildhood.iowa.gov](http://earlychildhood.iowa.gov).

*e.* In cooperation with the early childhood stakeholders alliance:

(1) Further the development of an early childhood integrated data system across state agencies and other partners.

(2) Develop guidance to identify and improve the quality of services in early care, health and education programs, including evidence-based practices.

(3) Promote other measures to advance the initiative.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; ARC 0179C, IAB 6/27/12, effective 8/1/12; ARC 3249C, IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

**441—121.5(256I) Early childhood Iowa coordination staff.** In consultation with the state board, the department shall provide fiscal oversight of the early childhood Iowa initiative. The fiscal oversight measures are defined in 441—Chapter 122.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

**441—121.6(256I) Early childhood Iowa areas.**

**121.6(1)** The state board shall approve early childhood Iowa area boundaries and the creation of area boards. Minimum criteria for areas and approval of area boards are set forth in Iowa Code section 256I.6.

**121.6(2)** The state board may waive any of the minimum criteria referenced in Iowa Code section 256I.6, if it is determined that exceptional circumstances exist. The state board further defines exceptional circumstances to include when the proposed change of boundaries creates hardship that reduces performance or quality of services within the area. The area board must provide compelling documentation of the hardship and clearly document the impact to performance or quality of services or both.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; ARC 3249C, IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

**441—121.7(256I) Early childhood stakeholders alliance.** The early childhood stakeholders alliance shall assist the state board in the development and implementation of the state board's strategic plan.

[ARC 9346B, IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/14/23]

**441—121.8(83GA,SF2088) Transition.** Rescinded ARC 3249C, IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 256I.1 to 256I.12.

[Filed ARC 9346B (Notice ARC 9137B, IAB 10/6/10), IAB 1/26/11, effective 3/2/11]

[Filed ARC 0179C (Notice ARC 0058C, IAB 4/4/12), IAB 6/27/12, effective 8/1/12]

[Filed ARC 3249C (Notice ARC 3011C, IAB 4/12/17), IAB 8/2/17, effective 9/6/17]

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