



Human Rights

FY2024

Table of Contents

Executive Summary3

Community Action Agencies Subdivision.....4

 Community Services Block Grant4

 Weatherization Assistance Program5

 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program6

 Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Program7

Community Advocacy and Services8

Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning.....9

 Justice Data Warehouse9

 Integrated Information System9

 Dashboard.....9

 State Juvenile Re-entry System9

 National Youth in Transition Database10

 Justice Advisory Board.....10

Executive Summary

This Annual Report is submitted pursuant to Iowa Code Section 216A.1(3), covering the operations of the Department of Health and Human Services relating to the responsibilities for Human Rights. Highlights of this report include the Department's efforts in helping Iowans attain self-sufficiency, enhancing service delivery for Iowans, and ensuring public safety.

Increasing Self-Sufficiency

We help Iowans achieve self-sufficiency by empowering them to improve their work skills, further their education, increase income, set career goals, and overcome barriers to success.

- ▶ Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) families earned total wages of \$11,087,097, resulting in a FIP savings of \$1,246,393.
- ▶ 140 adults who exited the FaDSS program achieved major education goals.
- ▶ Families that were employed at exit had an average monthly family income of \$4,520, an increase of \$2,990.

Enhancing Services to Iowans

To enhance internal operations and service delivery for Iowans, we actively participated in planning for many critical growth areas, including, but not limited to:

- ▶ Health Equity Assessment
- ▶ State Data Equity Plan
- ▶ Americans with Disabilities Act/Communication Access Planning
- ▶ Youth Leadership/Mentorship Planning

Improving the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System

We help state and local officials and practitioners identify issues and improve the criminal and juvenile justice systems through research, data, policy analysis, comprehensive planning, and grant administration.

- ▶ Iowa Integrated Justice performs approximately 950,000 individual exchanges of justice data per month.
- ▶ We created data dashboards that track pre-charge diversion and juvenile reentry.

Community Action Agencies Subdivision

The Subdivision of Community Action Agencies (CAA) within the Division of Community Access and Eligibility at Iowa HHS provides resources and opportunities to strengthen communities and empower Iowans to become self-sufficient.

Iowa has a network of 16 community action agencies across the state. Community action agencies are private, nonprofit and public organizations that create, coordinate, and deliver an array of comprehensive programs and services to people living in poverty. These programs and services reduce conditions of poverty, revitalize communities, and enable low-income families and individuals to secure opportunities to become self-sufficient. The agencies are governed by a uniquely structured tri-partite volunteer board of directors, comprised equally of elected public officials, private sector representatives, and low-income representatives. This structure is designed to promote the participation of the entire community in assessing local needs and attacking the causes and conditions of poverty.

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023, Iowa community action agencies:

- assisted over 268,000 individuals, including 117,000 families;
- administered over \$297 million in federal, state, local, and private funding;
- received over \$25 million in government and business in-kind services and donated items
- partnered with over 6,300 public and private organizations that provide programs and services to low-income Iowans; and
- were assisted by volunteers who contributed over 351,000 hours of service and support to their local communities.

The CAA subdivision is the focal point for community action agency activities within state government in Iowa. The CAA subdivision develops and expands the capacity at the community level to assist families and individuals to achieve economic and social self-sufficiency and to ensure that the basic needs of Iowa's low-income population are met.

The CAA subdivision administers four self-sufficiency programs:

- Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG)
- Weatherization Assistance Program
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Family Development and Self-Sufficiency Program (FaDSS)

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Program

The Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These federal funds are distributed to Iowa's 16 community action agencies, which create, coordinate, and deliver many programs and services to low-income Iowans. The CSBG funds the central management and core activities of these agencies. The agencies use the funds to mobilize additional public and private resources to combat the central causes of poverty in their communities and to assist low-income

individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and ensure their basic needs are met. In FFY2023 Iowa's CSBG funding was over \$8 million.

Iowa's community action agencies provide the following activities to help low-income Iowans:

- Remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self-sufficiency
- Secure and retain meaningful employment
- Attain an adequate education
- Make better use of available income
- Obtain and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living environment
- Obtain emergency assistance to meet the immediate and urgent family needs
- Achieve greater participation in the affairs of communities
- Address the needs of youth in low-income communities

Weatherization Assistance Program

The federal Weatherization Assistance Program reduces the burden of energy costs for low-income families by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and ensuring their health and safety, particularly the elderly, persons with disabilities, and families with children.

In Program Year (PY) 2023, the DCAA received over \$22 million from U.S. Department of Energy, \$10.2 million from LIHEAP, and \$3.9 million from the investor-owned utility companies. 1,184 Iowa homes were weatherized

Professionally trained technicians in the program use a Department of Energy-approved computerized energy audit to determine the most appropriate and cost-effective energy-saving measures that should be applied to the house. Typical measures include sealing air leaks, installing insulation in attics, walls, and crawlspaces, tuning and upgrading heating systems, and installing low-cost energy conservation measures.

Technicians also conduct checks on every home weatherized to ensure the health and safety of families. This consists of inspecting all combustion appliances for carbon monoxide and for the proper venting of gases. Unsafe furnaces are repaired or replaced. Homes are also inspected for other issues such as mold and unsafe electrical wiring. Carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors are installed in all homes.

Homes weatherized in Calendar Year 2022 saved an average of \$464 in first-year fuel bill costs in addition to the benefits of reducing energy use and ameliorating many health and safety problems.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is federally funded. LIHEAP assists qualifying low-income households in the payment of a portion of their winter heating costs, and to encourage energy conservation through client education and weatherization. All households applying for LIHEAP are simultaneously making application for weatherization assistance.

LIHEAP payments are weighted to award higher benefits to targeted households. These households include the elderly, persons with disabilities, working poor, and households with children under six years of age. Additionally, benefits are weighted to account for a household's level of poverty. Households certified eligible for LIHEAP (those at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines) are protected from disconnection of gas or electric service from November 1 until April 1 under Iowa's winter moratorium law.

Beyond regular assistance payments, LIHEAP has two additional components: Assurance 16 (A16), and Emergency Crisis Intervention Payments (ECIP). Activities covered under the A16 component include delivering client energy conservation education, referral to outside services, family needs assessment, budget counseling, vendor negotiation, household energy use assessment, household energy use planning, and low-cost energy efficiency measures.

The ECIP component of LIHEAP provides immediate financial assistance to alleviate life-threatening situations. Assistance payments are made to avert disconnection of heat sources or reconnect to heat sources when disconnection has already occurred, for repair or replacement of a furnace or heating system, obtaining temporary shelter, purchase of blankets and/or heaters, emergency fuel deliveries, purchasing or repairing air conditioning equipment when medically necessary, purchasing fans, and transporting clients to cooling centers during times of extreme heat.

LIHEAP Facts and Figures (Federal Fiscal Year 2023)

- 83,353 households received some type of energy assistance.
- The average statewide regular assistance LIHEAP benefit was an estimated \$468.
- 29.5% of households assisted by LIHEAP had an elderly household member.
- 41.5% of households assisted by LIHEAP had a member with a disability.
- 22.8 % of households assisted by LIHEAP had a child under 6 years of age.
- 54.1% of LIHEAP households were below 100% of federal poverty level.

The Community Action Agencies Annual Reports are filed on the legislative website:

[Iowa Legislature - LSA Publications](#).

Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS)

Iowa's Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) grant program assists Family Investment Program (FIP) families with significant or multiple barriers reach self-sufficiency. FaDSS provides services that promote, empower, and nurture families toward stability and economic self-sufficiency. The foundation of FaDSS is regular home visits with families using a strength-based approach.

In Program Year 2024:

- ▶ FaDSS served 2,220 families. Eight hundred and forty-six (846) families completed the program during the year, including 1,733 children.
- ▶ FaDSS families earned total wages of \$11,087,097, resulting in a FIP savings of \$1,246,393.

FaDSS Performance Outcomes – State Fiscal Year 2023

- ▶ 21% of FaDSSs households had at least one adult employed at program entry. At exit, 48% of households had at least one adult employed.
- ▶ 510 families were involved in activities designed to increase work preparedness skills. These activities, provided by FaDSS, include career exploration, interview preparation, resume development, providing job leads, and assistance with completing job applications.
- ▶ Families that were employed at exit had an average monthly family income of \$4,520, an increase of \$2,990.
- ▶ At entry, families averaged \$297 in monthly FIP payments. At exit, the average FIP payment for families was \$109, a decrease of \$187.
- ▶ 140 adults who exited the FaDSS program achieved major education goals.
- ▶ 167 FaDSS families that exited the program had experienced domestic violence as identified through self-disclosure or positive screening.
- ▶ 89% of families who screened positive accessed necessary and appropriate assistance.
- ▶ 409 adults that exited the program had a substantiated mental health issue.
- ▶ 86% of those adults with a mental health barrier accessed treatment. The FaDSS program assisted 89% of adults gaining access to treatment.
- ▶ 127 adults that exited the program had a substantiated substance abuse issue. Eighty-three percent of those adults with a substance abuse barrier accessed treatment. The FaDSS program assisted 68% with gaining access to treatment.

The FaDSS Annual Reports are filed on the legislative website:

[Iowa Legislature - LSA Publications.](#)

Community Advocacy and Services

Throughout FY 2024, the Community Advocacy and Services (CAS) team worked to re-create its mission and focus in the context of the newly aligned Department of Health and Human Services, along with the anticipated consolidation of its various commissions.

In July 2023, the CAS team was aligned with the Office of Health Equity and the Bureau of Refugee Services to better connect the planning, services and resources that had an intentional focus on underserved communities. The CAS team served in a consultative capacity to integrate the Human Rights focus into emerging business systems and processes. As HHS and other state agencies brought forward major initiatives to enhance internal operations and service delivery for lowans, the CAS team actively participated in planning for many critical growth areas, including, but not limited to:

- Health Equity Assessment
- State Data Equity Plan
- Americans with Disabilities Act/Communication Access Planning
- Youth Leadership/Mentorship Planning

To accomplish this, the CAS team also engaged relevant stakeholders and individuals with lived experience to ensure needs of all lowans were considered and addressed in planning processes.

The success of these efforts led to an examination of how HHS could better deploy the knowledge, skills and abilities of this team to ensure access to government for all Iowa, while making that access appropriate and effective for the diverse customers served. With the alignment of agencies throughout state government, the opportunity to incorporate the elements of effective service for all lowans is possible, and at HHS, it is at the forefront of how the agency is deploying the talents and skills of staff.

In March 2024, the CAS Team was functionally embedded in HHS' structure to focus on ensuring a commitment to connecting with, and effectively serving lowans who have been underrepresented in state government. This exciting new initiative will ensure lowans, regardless of location, income, race, ethnicity or disability, will receive the HHS services they need to build stability and create success in their lives, and the lives of their children.

Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning

Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning carried out research, policy and data analysis, program development, and grant management. These activities assist policy makers, justice system agencies, and others to identify issues of concern and to improve the operation and effectiveness of Iowa's justice system.

Justice Data Warehouse

The Justice Data Warehouse (JDW) is a central repository of key criminal and juvenile justice information. Primary sources of information in the warehouse are the Judicial Branch Case Management system for adults and juveniles, the Iowa Corrections Offender Network (ICON), and HHS FACS data regarding child welfare.

Iowa Integrated Justice

Iowa Integrated Justice (formerly known as Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS)) shares justice data among Iowa's justice agencies. IJJ performs approximately 950,000 individual exchanges of data per month, and most justice agencies in the state have come to rely on it for daily operations. Iowa Integrated Justice has expanded its reach to benefit all 99 counties, and transmits data between the Judicial Branch, DOC, DOT, DPS, DNR, HHS, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State Public Defender, and 67 county attorney offices. Also, it currently transmits data to and from 259 local police departments, all 99 county sheriffs' offices, and the Iowa State Patrol.

Dashboard

Research and data experts have created data dashboards in Looker Studio that track Pre-Charge Diversion and Juvenile Reentry. The Juvenile Reentry dashboards include statewide data, plus four facility-specific dashboards for those facilities to utilize for their own tracking efforts.

Other dashboards are currently in development, including one tracking Level 1 and Level 2 Juvenile Court Services Diversions and another with crash data for the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau.

Statewide Comprehensive Juvenile Reentry System (JReS)

A diverse, state-level, Juvenile Reentry Task Force is continuing state-level implementation of a juvenile reentry process seeking recidivism reductions for youth involved in the juvenile justice system and increases in positive outcomes, such as school achievement, job readiness, obtaining jobs, connecting to career pathways and, community connectedness. The goal is to connect individuals into career pathways and support systems reducing recidivism and expanding access in obtaining financial independence through competitive, integrated employment.

National Youth in Transition Database (NYTD)

Iowa NYTD is a federal mandate for the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to collect outcome information (via a standardized survey) from current and former youth in foster care or another out-of-home placement.

The outcomes collected through the NYTD survey provides information on areas for improvements to the foster care system to better serve youth transitioning to independence. In addition to collecting survey results from these youth populations, Iowa NYTD will continue to positively engage youth in foster care and juvenile justice through the Talking Wall. The Talking Wall is an activity that provides an opportunity for youth to appropriately and effectively use their voice as a tool for change. In 2023, the Talking Wall was hosted at 50 different locations, included voices from 570 youth, and produced 2,850 post-it notes.

The results of the Talking Wall were presented over 25 times across the state, and led to the some of the following changes:

- The Youth Report to the Court was developed and implemented.
- Youth Justice Council partnered with law students to co-create administrative rule and contract recommendations to improve youth's access to hygiene (including skin, hair and period) products that they need.
- A stakeholder group made up of representatives from Department of Education, Human Rights, detention director, AEA, and DMACC convened to identify a process and overcome barriers to youth working on their HiSET while in detention.
- Administrative rules were amended to increase the clothing allowance for youth in foster care.
- Practice bulletins and guidance were provided to juvenile judges in Iowa.

Justice Advisory Board

The Justice Advisory Board focused on the following priority areas in the three-year criminal and juvenile justice plan:

- 1) Racial Justice
- 2) Mental Health
- 3) Community-Based Corrections & Alternatives to Incarceration
- 4) Sex Crimes
- 5) Equal Access to Justice

The three-year plan can be accessed on the legislative website: [Iowa Legislature - LSA Publications](#)

hhs.iowa.gov