



State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council Annual Report 2024 - 2025



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Introductions

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) is the only codified youth advisory council in the State of Iowa. SIYAC exists to foster communication and collaboration between a group of engaged youth from across the state and the governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies and practices affecting youth and families.

As a part of HHS's External Relations Division, SIYAC's guiding principles include:

- Data driven
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Equity
- Communication
- Collaboration



SIYAC Chair Hadley with Secretary of State Paul Pate

Roles and Responsibilities of SIYAC

SIYAC was established in 2001 by Governor Tom Vilsack as a way for youth to inform legislators and other policymakers on youth issues. In 2009, SIYAC was written into code ensuring youth voice remained an active part of the Iowa government.

In 2024 changes were made to SIYAC's code, broadening SIYAC's roles and responsibilities. According to the Iowa Code 216A.140(2)(b) SIYAC's new duties include:

1. Adopt and apply positive youth development principles and practices at the state and local levels.
2. Increase the quality efficiency, and effectiveness of opportunities and services and other supports for youth.
3. Improve, coordinate and prioritize state youth policy and programs across state agencies.
4. Align all policies around the vision that all Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood.
5. Review indicator data, identify barriers to youth success, and develop strategies to address the barriers.

6. Strengthen partnerships with the nonprofit and private sectors to gather input, build consensus, and maximize the use of existing resources and leverage new resources to improve the lives of youth and their families.
7. Report annually by February 1 to the governor and the general assembly.

SIYAC Structure

SIYAC meets virtually once a month and in-person quarterly to share information about current projects for the committee.

During the First Quarterly Meeting on October 18, 2024, SIYAC reviewed data from the 2023 Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) survey, 2023 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey and 2023 Iowa Youth Survey to discuss needs of youth across the state. Using this data, SIYAC placed the priorities of youth into the following committees:

- Education Committee
- Community Engagement Committee
- Mental Health Committee
- STEM committee



State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council, Youth Justice Council and Iowa Students for Tobacco Education and Prevention meet with HHS Director Kelly Garcia during Day on the Hill.

SIYAC formed an additional committee during the December 2024 monthly meeting focusing on partnerships with Executive Branch agencies to increase youth voice and involvement.

- Youth Policy Advisory Board

SIYAC members are expected to participate in one Individual Service Project within their local community. SIYAC also completes a Group Service Project with all members of the council, typically carried out during the last quarterly meeting of the SIYAC term.

Through the work SIYAC has undertaken, SIYAC members will:

- Gain leadership skills and opportunities through executive positions and committee chair leadership.
- Participate in networking opportunities with youth, executive agency employees, state legislators, and local policymakers from across the state.

- Increase their knowledge of the legislative process and the issues that youth across the state face.
- Improve professional communication skills through collaboration amongst members and partners.
- Enhance research and data collection skills through the biennial Youth Participatory Action Research Survey
- Receive recognition for their work representing the youth of Iowa.

Guest Speakers

Guest speakers from Iowa HHS such as Director of Government Relations, Carrie Malone, Healthy Iowans Steering Committee Coordinator, Katie Damon, and CAPP/SRAE Program Manager, Andrew Minear, spoke at SIYAC quarterly meetings. These conversations have identified a need to bring youth perspectives to State Government.

Legislative Priorities

During the Third Quarterly Meeting, Day on the Hill, SIYAC members create priority documents informing policy makers and stakeholders on issues related to youth.

SIYAC's Legislative Priorities for 2024-2025 include:

- **Mental Health Resources Accessibility** – a proposal supporting the requirement of mental health resources and information on school websites and bringing awareness to resources and information.
- **Inclusive Disability Education for Teachers** – a proposal to modify Iowa Code to require state-mandated in-person or online inclusive disability education training for teachers.
- **Student Representation on School Boards** – a proposal supporting the establishment of student representative positions on public school boards ensuring student's engagement, civic education, and overall community involvement.



SIYAC members Alexis and Ebele talking to Senator Art Staed.

- **Improvement of Youth Voter Registration** – A proposal to adapt Iowa Code §48A.23 to include two opportunities to register to vote during the school day and a two-hour excused absence to vote on election day allowing more access to voter registration resources and opportunities for to vote amongst youth across Iowa.

Ongoing Projects

SIYAC is focused on increasing collaboration with Executive Branch agencies to ensure youth voices and perspectives are considered in State Government operations.

Education Committee

- Working on compiling a research document with fact sheets regarding disability education to improve advocacy efforts.



SIYAC member Lin with Senator Cherilynn Westrich.

Mental Health Committee

- Collaborating with Your Life Iowa to improve youth access to mental health information on the Your Life Iowa website.

STEM Committee

- Promoting STEM education through STEM checkout kits in public libraries.
- Created a food waste reduction and recycling guide for schools to utilize in sustainability efforts.

Community Engagement Committee

- Creating a factsheet on the needs of foster care youth to more effectively advocate for solutions in the foster care system.
- Researching organizations that are implementing mentorship programs to expand youth mentorship across the state.

Youth Policy Advisory Board

- Collaborating with the Iowa HHS Child and Adolescent Health Program to bring youth voices to the discussion as they develop future youth programs.
- Working with the Iowa HHS Fostering Economic Mobility Workgroup to ensure youth are included in the conversation around economic prosperity.