
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2023

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2022



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Child and Family Services

Background

Child and Family Services (CFS) programs are administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and provide for a multitude of child welfare and juvenile justice services. Child welfare and juvenile justice services and interventions for children, youth, and families are designed to improve safety, permanency, well-being, and community safety. The DHS Division of Child Services regulates and subcontracts appropriated State and federal funding for the delivery of community-based services and interventions.

Populations Served

Child welfare services are provided to children and families who are either at risk of abuse or have experienced abuse, including those who have been adjudicated a child in need of assistance (CINA). In addition, services are available to youth who have “aged out” of the foster care system and are employed or going to school. According to the DHS, the majority of children who have been abused are five years old or younger and are victims of denial of critical care. In calendar year 2020, a combined total of 30,151 child protective assessments were completed. Of these, 23,701 (78.6%) were child abuse assessments and 6,450 (21.4%) were family assessments. An average of 450 youth age out of the foster care system each year. One hundred seventy-seven youth aged out of foster care and initiated aftercare services in FY 2021, which is a reduction from previous years, consistent with the declining numbers of youth in foster care.

Juvenile justice services are provided to children and their families if the children are at risk of continued delinquent behavior, have committed a delinquent act and have been adjudicated as a delinquent, or have been certified by the chief juvenile court officer as eligible for court-ordered services.

According to the DHS, during FY 2021, there were 9,494 referrals against juveniles filed (6,589 youth). Less than 20.0% of the juveniles with a complaint were referred for a formal delinquency petition (3,095 petitions filed for 1,295 youth).

Child Welfare Services

The DHS strives to provide child welfare services that protect children and preserve and strengthen families by the least intrusive, least restrictive means possible. The federal Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First) was signed into law in February 2018. Family First provides new directives for services eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement by shifting funding traditionally used to support foster care placements into prevention services to reduce entry into foster care through evidence-based family preservation services to increase the use of family-based placements, decrease the use of congregate care settings, and improve access to high-quality residential care for children and youth who have acute mental and behavioral health needs. Under Family First, when a child must be removed from the child’s home to ensure safety, placement priority must be given to relatives and fictive kin. The DHS has

More Information

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established performance-based contracts with child welfare providers that align with Children and Family Services federal outcomes, including Family First. These providers make available a wide array of services, including:

- Early intervention and prevention services, such as nonagency voluntary services and decategorization services, that build on families' resources and community supports.
- In-home Family-Centered Services that implement evidence-based practices to assist families with developing prevention skills, improve parenting skills, and provide crisis interventions when there is imminent risk of removal.
- Out-of-home services that provide a safe environment when a child is not able to remain in the home. In keeping with Family First, placement priority is given to relatives and fictive kin. Services are provided to address both the parents' and child's needs as well as to support kinship caregivers to maintain placement stability. Services include:
 - The Parent Partners program, which provides peer mentoring for families in the child welfare system to improve engagement between families and the system, shorten lengths of stay for children in care, and maximize available community supports and services to reduce family reentry into the child welfare system. This service is available in approximately two-thirds of the State.
 - Kinship Navigator services, which assist kinship caregivers in learning about, finding, and using programs and services to meet their needs. Kinship placements help reduce trauma, preserve cultural identity and community connections, and improve child well-being. Kinship Navigator services were made available statewide through the Family-Centered Services contracts on July 1, 2021.
 - Kinship caregiver payment, which is a time-limited payment that allows kinship caregivers to receive financial support for each child court-ordered and placed in their care. Kinship caregiver payments were made available to unlicensed kinship caregivers statewide on July 1, 2021.
 - Family foster care services, which are designed to provide a temporary safe environment while parents are addressing the issues that put a child at risk. In SFY 2021, 1,622 children were served on average each month in family foster care, and there are currently 1,772 foster families.
- Group foster care services, which are designed to treat children with behavior too severe to live safely in a less restrictive setting like a foster home. There are currently 12 group care contractors, with a total of 1,165 available beds, located throughout the State.
- Child Welfare Emergency Services (CWES), which include an array of short-term and temporary interventions that range from the least restrictive approaches that can be used to avoid out-of-home placement (such as family conflict mediation or in-home interventions) to more restrictive services (including emergency juvenile shelter care). There are currently 14 CWES contractors, which offer 17 CWES juvenile shelters. These contracts provide for 220 beds, although additional beds can be purchased up to the maximum number of licensed beds (currently 326). Both the DHS and Juvenile Court Services utilize CWES.
- Transition services, such as Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) and Supervised Apartment Living (SAL), which support youth aged 18 to 21 years old who have aged out of foster care. Emphasis is placed on life skills, housing, employment, education, budgeting, and relationships. Youth receive individualized services from case managers called self-sufficiency advocates. A network of 9 child welfare providers comprises the Iowa Aftercare Services Network, providing services to approximately 490 youth monthly. In FY 2018, 94.0% of youth participating in aftercare reported having a safe and stable place to live, and 99.0% reported having one or more supportive relationships.

Juvenile Justice Services

Juvenile justice services ensure public safety by addressing delinquent behaviors. Graduated sanctions include four specific service programs: life skills; school-based supervision; supervised community treatment; and tracking, monitoring, and outreach. There are 93 graduated sanctions contracts with community providers for these services. Juvenile court/school liaisons are located in 62 school districts.

Tracking and monitoring services are provided by 19 social services agencies. There were 754 tracking and monitoring cases closed in FY 2021.

Ten juvenile detention centers provide services to an average of 143 youth per day. The Eldora Training School for Boys provides treatment and educational services within a highly structured setting to assist youth who are adjudicated delinquent. State funding for this institution is not included in the CFS appropriation, but it is an important component of the child welfare system.

In addition to child welfare and juvenile justice services, Medicaid Behavioral Health Intervention Services (BHIS) are available for eligible children to improve social and behavioral functioning. The BHIS are provided by a network of 133 providers; many in the network also provide other child welfare and juvenile justice services. The BHIS are not included in the CFS State appropriation, but they are an important component of the child welfare system.

Funding

The CFS General Fund appropriation is included in the Health and Human Services Appropriations Act. State funding accounts for approximately 56.0% of CFS total expenditures. Title IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Social Services Block Grant provide federal matching funds for services. States are subject to financial penalties ranging from 1.0% to 5.0% of federal Title IV-B and IV-E funding if they fail to meet federal expectations, including annual targets for monthly visits with children in foster care.

The CFS programs include a broad range of services and interventions for children, youth, and families. The average cost of services and interventions varies. The following provides approximate costs:

- Approximate cost per child for family safety, risk, and permanency service: \$6,300 (per average 10-month episode of service).
- Approximate annual cost per child for family foster care: \$15,800.
- Approximate annual cost per child for group foster care: \$82,000.
- Approximate cost per child for an average 15-day CWES/emergency juvenile shelter care stay: \$3,000.
- Approximate annual cost per youth for PAL: \$8,000.
- Approximate annual cost per youth for SAL: \$35,200.
- Approximate cost per youth for graduated sanctions adolescent tracking and monitoring service: \$1,000 (per average three-month episode of service).
- Approximate cost per youth for graduated sanctions supervised community treatment service: \$1,400 (per average three-month episode of service).

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapters [232](#), [232B](#), [233](#), [234](#), [235](#), [235A](#), [237](#), and [238](#)
Iowa Administrative Code [441](#)

Budget Unit Number

4130N710001

Doc ID 1284912