

# Iowa Department of Human Services

## Children with Disabilities

Contact Information: Mary Nelson, [mnelson1@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:mnelson1@dhs.state.ia.us) (515) 281-5521

### **Description of Family Support Programs:**

#### ▪ **Family Support Subsidy**

- *Eligibility.* Families are eligible for a family support subsidy (FSS) if their net income is below \$40,000.
- *Number Served.* The family support subsidy program can serve 378 children at any one time. There is currently a waiting list for the FSS of 218 children; the average wait to participate in the program is 3 years.
- *Benefits.* The family support subsidy program provides a monthly payment of \$353.29 to help defray some of the special costs of caring for a child with a disability at home. The payment amount is based on the monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment, although the FSS program has not received the SSI cost of living adjustment since July 1, 2000. Families have total flexibility to decide how to best spend the subsidy to meet their children's special needs. Approximately 70% of children receiving a family support subsidy also receive Medicaid waiver services. A small number of children also receive an adoption subsidy.

#### ▪ **Children-at-Home**

- *Eligibility.* Families are eligible for children-at-home (CAH) services if their net income is below \$60,000.
- *Number Served.* The CAH program serves over 600 children each year.
- *Benefits:* The Children at Home program provides similar assistance to that provided by the FSS program, except that the assistance is provided on an "as needed" basis and is generally time-limited, in many cases one-time-only. The average family receives about \$350 in services/supports per year under this program. In addition to helping families purchase needed services and resources, this program also provides service coordination.
- *Other Information.* DHS contracts with local agencies to administer the CAH program. Each site is required to form a parent advisory council that sets local spending guidelines and helps identify additional local resources. CAH sites leverage approximately 20% of additional resources for families through their service coordination activities.

## **DHS Legislative Proposal:**

DHS has submitted a legislative proposal to make several changes in the Family Support programs that would allow families on the waiting list to access the family support subsidy and that would support potential expansion of the children-at-home program to additional counties, within the current appropriation. This proposal was developed based on input from the Family Support Services Council.

Following is a summary of the key provisions.

- Family Support Subsidy Eligibility Changes
  - Children that receive an adoption subsidy would no longer be eligible for the family support subsidy, effective 7-1-06.
  - Children that are receiving Medical Assistance Home and Community Based Waiver services and live in a county with a children-at-home program would no longer be eligible for the family support subsidy, effective 1-1-07.
  - Children that receive Medical Assistance Home and Community Based Waiver services in a county in which the self-determination option is available under the waiver, would no longer be eligible for the family support subsidy 6 months after DHS implements the self-determination option in that county.
- Redirection of Savings. Savings generated from the changes in eligibility would be reinvested into serving families from the Family Support Subsidy waiting list and expanding the Children at Home program to additional counties.