



The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) members are **7000** voices strong. Iowa's foster, adoptive and kinship families provide children with an opportunity to grow and thrive in safe and nurturing homes.

WHAT IS IFAPA?

The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) is a grassroots organization that has been serving Iowa's foster, adoptive and kinship parents for 42 years and has been honored by the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA) as their Association of the Year in 1999 and received their Service and Recognition Award in 2003 for hosting the NFPA national conference. In 2011, IFAPA was named Parent Group of the Year by the North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC). These awards would not have been possible without a staff and Board of Directors dedicated to providing high quality support services to Iowa's 7,000 foster, adoptive and kinship families caring for Iowa's most vulnerable children.

IFAPA is currently in Year 1 of a 2-year contract with the Iowa Department of Human Services. Our annual contract amount is \$1,088,000. **All of IFAPA's programs are critical to ensure high quality, lasting placements. Without the education, training, peer support and resources IFAPA offers, families would have no context for how to work with these challenging kids.**

Trainings for Foster, Adoptive & Kinship Parents

Because IFAPA has been a part of the foster, adoptive and kinship care service arena for a significant period of time, the association has been able to develop progressive trainings and supports that provide consistent services to resource families across the state. **In 2014 IFAPA provided 310 training sessions throughout the state to 4,600 people (including two state conferences which have 350-400 attendees)** on topics that cover issues relevant to the foster, adoptive and kinship experience including courses on attachment, trauma, human trafficking, LGBTQ, behavioral issues, and mental health diagnoses (i.e. reactive attachment disorder, anxiety, mood disorders, autism spectrum disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, etc.) in addition to mandatory foster care licensing courses such as CPR, First Aid and Mandatory Child Abuse Reporter Training. IFAPA works with 65 trainers with a vast array of experience. Twenty-eight of those are current or former foster/adoptive parents and eleven have either a Master's degree or PhD. IFAPA firmly believes that parents with access to high-quality information decreases the likelihood that a placement will disrupt therefore creating stability and security for a child. IFAPA also believes with access to high quality training that a foster parent will be less likely to experience an abuse allegation and will have tools necessary to manage challenging behaviors that children who have endured trauma and significant loss display.

IFAPA is also proud to be a national leader in providing resource parents with high quality information about the role that trauma experiences play in the physical, psychological, behavioral, emotional and educational development of children in care. In 2011, IFAPA worked closely with the National Child Trauma Stress Network (NCTSN) to

bring *Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Training for Resource Parents* to Iowa. This fourteen hour training provides resource families with information about what trauma is, how it impacts brain development, ways to best handle behavior issues as well as a parental self-care component. Since 2011, 2,150 individuals have completed some or all of the eight training modules. Through a grant from the Mid Iowa Health Foundation, IFAPA has worked with training providers to ensure there is a trauma component in all trainings, including mandatory trainings. This work has made IFAPA a national leader in resource parent training and will significantly strengthen the skill set of Iowa's resource families. **IFAPA has been invited to speak nationally about our trauma training program model.**

Peer Liaison Program

In addition to IFAPA's strong and advanced training program, IFAPA offers innovative support services. IFAPA's Peer Liaison program is the first of its kind not only in the state, but across the nation. It has been used as a model for programs in Washington and Nebraska and for NACAC's post adoption support worker program. **IFAPA's Peer Liaisons (11 part time staff serving 180-220 families each) are each a foster and/or adoptive parent that provide peer support to other resource parents.** The average length of service for IFAPA's Peer Liaisons is seven years with four of IFAPA's current Peer Liaisons providing support to resource families for sixteen or more years. This level of experience provides much needed consistency and trust for families, especially when turnover of human service staff in other aspects of the foster care service arena is quite high.

IFAPA's Peer Liaisons serve a unique purpose. As current foster parents with many years of experience, Peer Liaisons are able to provide Iowa's resource families with first-hand knowledge and support as they work with the Agency, the Agency's contractor for the Recruitment and Retention of Resource Families, birth parents, educators, medical and mental health professionals, and therapists. Peer Liaisons also assist foster, adoptive and kinship parents by using their experiences to provide assistance on how to manage challenging behaviors, resolve crises, and reduce placement disruptions. Peer Liaisons are able to provide a listening ear when the fostering experience becomes overwhelming to parents.

Resource Information Specialists

IFAPA has two Resource Information Specialists who help families successfully meet the challenges of parenting the children placed in their home through telephone support, educational materials, knowledge of available services, and connections to other families. They also research and develop materials and resources for foster and adoptive families.

Both Resource Information Specialists are a foster and/or adoptive parents so they have personal experience and understand the issues that can challenge resource families. They can provide information on a variety of topics such as working with birth families, explaining foster care and adoption to children, understanding children's mental health, seeking out respite options, dealing with behavior challenges, choosing a therapist who is adoption/foster care sensitive, and more. Their areas of expertise include adoption subsidy, the adoption tax credit, school-related issues, HIV/AIDS and kinship care.

FAIR Program

This program was developed to assist foster and adoptive parents who face an allegation of abuse or neglect and is designed to provide support, information and resources during a

difficult time. The IFAPA FAIR program has a toll-free confidential phone line. The FAIR Coordinator can answer questions and provide accurate information regarding the assessment process as well as foster home licensing issues.

Adoption Respite Program

Respite care provides adoptive parents with a break from the day-to-day constant demands of caring for their special needs adopted child/ren. It may be used for planned activities or emergency situations. Families who have adopted a special needs child/ren, are eligible for five days of respite per year. IFAPA administers the Subsidized Adoption Respite Program for DHS by facilitating the respite payments. IFAPA has been administering this program since its inception in 1997.

Each year IFAPA has paid Adoption Respite requests for over 1,200 subsidized adoptive children in Iowa.

IFAPA Publication Resources

IFAPA publishes a variety of resource materials for foster, adoptive and kinship parents to assist them in understanding DHS procedures and to enhance their parenting skills. IFAPA also publishes a printed newsletter that is sent to all of our members on a quarterly basis. Our Association also keeps families informed with our weekly electronic newsletter that includes information on IFAPA programs, upcoming trainings, DHS updates, parenting children who have experienced trauma, handling difficult behaviors and working with birth parents.

IFAPA Website Resources

The IFAPA website serves as a resource for families and social workers in the field. Parents have access to a wealth of foster/adoptive information. **IFAPA has an average of 250,000 hits on our website on a monthly basis.** Individuals from Iowa as well as out of state frequently access information and report they find the website well organized and high quality. IFAPA is also able to have families register online for courses as well as make payment for conferences or special events which we find to be convenient for both the families we serve as well as IFAPA staff.

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

- a. Do you have defined outcomes or measurements for your program(s)? What are they and are these measures listed somewhere so the public can see them?

IFAPA's contract with DHS states Performance Measures that must be met on a quarterly basis. These include the following five performance measures:

Performance Measure 1

Resource parents will have increased knowledge and skills for addressing the needs of foster children placed in their care such as in the areas of behavior management, trauma, Child development, and supervision. Eighty-five percent (85%) or more of resource parents surveyed will report their training improved their knowledge and skill level for addressing the needs of foster children during the first year of the contract. For the second year of the contract eighty-seven (87%) will report the training improved their knowledge and skill level, and by the additional third year of the contract eight-nine (89%) will report improvement in these areas.

Performance Measure 2

Resource parents are satisfied with the services provided by the Contractor as evidenced by the quarterly survey results. The Contractor shall achieve eighty-five percent (85%) or greater satisfaction rating from resource parents who utilized services from the Contractor for the first year of the contract. For the second year of the contract, eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents will report satisfaction and by the additional third year eighty-nine percent (89%) will report satisfaction.

Performance Measure 3

The Contractor shall provide at a minimum sixty (60) in-service trainings each contract quarter. The contract quarters are defined as:

- July 1 through Sept. 30.
- Oct. 1 through Dec. 31
- Jan 1 through March 31
- April 1 through June 30

Performance Measure 4

The Contractor's Peer Liaisons shall have a minimum of one contact (telephone, or individualized mail or e-mail conversation) per quarter with each of the current licensed Foster Families. The Contractor shall achieve this at least eighty-five percent (85%) of the time.

Performance Measure 5

The Contractor shall make payment for Adoption Respite care within sixty days (60) after receipt of a valid invoice as defined in section 1.3.1.3.3. The Contractor shall achieve this at least ninety-five percent (95%) of the time.

DHS does not make its contractors information available on their website.

- b. What data is available to show lowans that your program(s) are an effective investment of taxpayer dollars? Where can lowans find this data?

IFAPA prepares a quarterly report regarding our programs and support services. This report is available on our website; www.ifapa.org. This quarterly report gives evidence of the ways

in which IFAPA is meeting all of its contract performance measures. IFAPA's contract funding is based upon the successful completion of all performance measures.

- c. Can you provide the committee with performance data for your programs over the last 5 or 10 years?

The program requirements have changed since the new contract with DHS began July 1, 2014. The last two quarterly reports since the start of this new contract are available on IFAPA's website. The reports for the previous six year contract can be made available to the committee upon request.

PROGRAM EFFICIENCY

- a. Have you examined what other states are doing to improve performance and reduce costs?

Yes, IFAPA has reviewed other similar state associations from around the country. What we discovered is that most states are made up of smaller regional or county based associations, which do training and/or supports for a smaller segment of the resource family populations in their states. Having services provided by one association in a statewide format allows for continuity of services, consistent quality of services as well as general ease in accessibility of trainings and support for resource families from rural and metro areas in Iowa.

- b. Can you share with the committee what other states are doing?

Iowa is one of a handful of states that uses a statewide approach to offer support services to its families. Iowa has been a leader in the nation with its training and peer support programs. IFAPA has been asked to share its program ideas and designs with several other state and national organizations. Previous IFAPA staff and board members have spoken to NACAC and NFPA to share IFAPA's program successes.

- c. Which of these ideas are you considering for implementation here in Iowa?

IFAPA has not found another state's program that we would duplicate in Iowa. We feel our quality of trainings and supports is superior to most other states. Moving to a county-by-county or regional approach used in other states would create confusion for families, increase costs and reduce the quality of supports provided to resource parents.

- d. Are there websites or organizations we could go to obtain more information on what other states' programs are doing to provide more efficient services?

Each state has its own county/agency websites that could be researched for services.

- e. Do you have an email address or a comment section on your website where Iowans can suggest improvements to your program or agency?

There is a contact email address listed on IFAPA's website where Iowans can contact IFAPA. IFAPA also sends out a quarterly survey to all Iowa resource families' email addresses which gives them the opportunity to offer feedback and suggestions on IFAPA programs and support services. IFAPA also gives Iowa resource families the opportunity to request training topics, offer comments on current trainings and programs through our training evaluation feedback forms distributed at each of our trainings.

PROGRAM DUPLICATION

a. Are there any other programs that are providing the same or similar services?

No, there are currently no other programs that offer the same services that IFAPA does. IFAPA has a sole source contract with DHS for Support Services for Iowa's Resource Families. IFAPA's Peer Liaison Program is unique in that it is a peer support program, with all of our Peer Liaisons being foster parents themselves (for a minimum of 5 years, many with over 20 years of foster parenting experience in Iowa).

IFAPA is the only organization that receives funds for the training of foster and adoptive parents. Each year IFAPA trains over 4,600 foster and adoptive parents in Iowa through its choices of 3 or 6 hour trainings and its bi-annual statewide conferences.

b. Is there a reason why we need more than one program providing the same or similar service?

This is not applicable for IFAPA's trainings, Adoption Respite, FAIR and Peer Liaison programs as IFAPA is the only DHS contractor providing these specific programs.

c. Have you had any discussions with the other agencies or programs to find ways to maximize the use of the taxpayer's dollars?

IFAPA works closely with numerous local and statewide agencies to maximize the number of Iowa families served as well as to offer additional resources to our member families. Some of those agencies are; Iowa KidsNet, AMP (Achieving Maximum Potential), DHS, DECAT, etc. We have also sought out other groups to partner with in order to offer additional trainings beyond our contract requirements.

We partnered with two local foundations in order to offer a trauma informed care component to each of our existing trainings. This has enabled Iowa's families to stay on the cutting edge of trauma informed care issues. IFAPA has worked closely with the Trauma Informed Care Stakeholders, ASK Resources, the Child Advocacy Center from Blank Children's Hospital, and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Coalition (ACES), to name a few.

d. Are there any laws or administrative rules that would limit your ability to work with the other programs or departments?

No, there are no laws or administrative rules that would limit IFAPA's ability to work with other programs or departments.

e. Are there any laws or administrative rules that could be changed to make your program or agency work better?

There are four administrative rules that, if changed, would increase IFAPA's ability to better serve Iowa's foster and adoptive families.

- 1) Rule [IAC 441-117.7(3)] States that, each individual foster parent shall complete six credit hours of department-approved in-service training annually.** Iowa has one of the lowest ongoing training requirements in the country. Many states have at least 12 hours with some as many as 30 hours/year required. IFAPA has long felt that additional

training can only help our families better parent the troubled and vulnerable children in their care.

- 2) **Rule [IAC 441-117.7(3)b.(3)] This rule states that a parent is only able to take a specific training one time-and not repeat that training during the course of their licensure in order to receive credit hours.** This is problematic for families that want to complete training that is beneficial to them and their current parenting situation. Families may have learned about reactive attachment disorders in a training prior to ever parenting a child with reactive attachment disorders, therefore they cannot receive training credit again to better educate themselves which directly impacts their success in parenting the specific child's needs in their home. IFAPA would like to see this rule eliminated as this is not in the best interest of resource parents or Iowa's children.
- 3) **Rule [IAC 441-117.7(2)] States that if a video training is used, only half the time of the video is actually authorized for training credit.** For instance if a support group facilitator shows a two-hour training video to a group of families, they each may only claim one hour of training credit. This is not justifiable to the physical amount of time they have been trained.
- 4) **Rule 441—117.8(237) Specific in-service training required.**
 - a) **117.8(1) Medication management.** Within the initial training cycle, each individual foster parent shall complete one hour of training related to the use and practice of medication management. This course cannot be repeated for in-service training credit.
 - b) **117.8 (2) Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).** All foster parents shall be certified in CPR every three years and shall maintain a certificate indicating the date of training and expiration.
 - c) **117.8(3) First aid.** All foster parents shall be certified in first aid every three years and shall maintain a certificate indicating the date of training and expiration.
 - d) **117.8(4) Child abuse reporting.** Each foster parent shall complete approved training relating to the identification of child abuse and requirements and procedures for the reporting of child abuse pursuant to Iowa Code section 232.68

Training and education on parenting and children's behavior issues is vital to the quality and length of placements. For this reason, IFAPA would like to see this rule amended. Although, Medication Management, First Aid, CPR and Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting trainings are important, they do not address critical parenting needs or children's mental, physical and behavior training that we identify for the benefit of both the foster and adoptive parents and the children in their homes.

OTHER

- a. Would it be a burden to your agency to ask that your presentation be delivered to the Legislative Services Agency 48 hours in advance of your appearance before the committee?
No, we will have the presentation delivered to the Legislative Services Agency 48 hours prior to our appearance.
- b. If you are required to reduce your budget by 1%, 5%, or 10%, where would you suggest we focus our attention?

If IFAPA was required to cut its budget by 1%

If IFAPA was required to cut its budget by 1% this would mean a cut of \$10,880/year. This amount would require us to focus our attention on the reduction of printed materials and shift to providing all support and training materials in an electronic format to all lowans including those in rural areas with limited internet access and this would be a disservice for those who do not have the financial means to access electronic support.

If IFAPA was required to cut its budget by 5%

If IFAPA was required to cut its budget by 5% this would mean a cut of \$544,000/year. In addition to providing all support and training material in an electronic format, IFAPA would also have to make substantial cuts to one of our programs that enhance the care for the children that Iowa families care for. However, a solution could be that IFAPA would reduce the contract requirement to provide two state-wide training conferences to only one conference. A 5% budget cut would also require IFAPA to reduce the current number of trainings offered per quarter. The contracted number requires sixty trainings per quarter, and this would need to be significantly decreased. This reduction would force IFAPA to shift trainings from some of the more rural areas of the state to only the major cities in the state to maximize the remaining budget dollars, which in turn would require families to travel further and may result in a decrease in our foster family retention rate.

If IFAPA was required to cut its budget by 10%

If IFAPA was required to cut its budget by 10% this would mean a cut of \$108,800/year. This would require numerous program changes to occur. IFAPA would move to electronic materials and put in place the training restrictions mentioned in the previous paragraph. Additionally, IFAPA would be required to charge resource families a fee to access support programs in an effort to offset costs. Resource parents currently provide care to Iowa's most vulnerable children on a very tight budget. Being charged a membership fee to access support services would likely mean that parents would go without vital information as well as negatively impact overall retention rates of Iowa's resource families.

More information can be found by visiting our website at www.ifapa.org