



2008 Legislative Priorities

1. Child Welfare Funding

❖ **Provide a rate increase for child welfare/juvenile justice providers to adjust for inflation and salary improvements**

Child Welfare Providers' rates need to be adjusted for inflation each year or contracts should include an annual review mechanism for allowable growth. Child welfare has no third party payers, as do most other providers. Therefore, child welfare providers cannot turn to others to make up for the lack of state increases.

Additionally, the gap between public and private worker salaries continues to widen. It is increasingly challenging to recruit and retain qualified employees; and staff turnover has increased, disrupting the continuity and quality of services to children. Evidence has shown that outcomes for children decrease dramatically with each change of staff.

◆ **The Coalition asks that provider rates should be tied to the CPI and an increase given each year, allowable growth to be determined by the legislature each year.**

❖ **Transportation**

Both the number of requests to transport children and the cost of gasoline continue to rapidly increase. The cost of transporting clients to see their family, go to doctor visits, meet with workers, etc has increased substantially, especially in rural areas. Agencies can no longer absorb the cost of transportation.

◆ **The Coalition asks that a separate service rate be developed for transportation. The rate would be \$15 per**

hour and the same mileage reimbursement as paid for other state travel.

❖ **Liability Insurance**

Rapidly increasing liability insurance rates decrease the ability to provide other badly needed services for children.

- ◆ **The Coalition requests the legislature extend its indemnity for children who are under the state's care to provider agencies that are providing services to those children on behalf of the state.**

❖ **Payment for attending Family Team meetings**

The Coalition believes the Department should pay for all required services that it mandates, including attendance at Family Team Meetings.

2. Emergency Services

A new emergency services system will continue to be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and should be easy for children, families and professionals to access. A Statewide Emergency Services system should lead to better access to appropriate services for families and children. The services should be strategically placed so that the state is geographically covered.

It is necessary to maintain core funding for the emergency services, equivalent to at least the current 273 beds. It is important to have a minimum of 10 beds per facility in order to prevent the closure of existing children's shelters and maintain the current shelter system.

- ◆ **The Coalition asks that its detailed vision for emergency services in Iowa be implemented.**
- ◆ **The Coalition opposes reducing the number of children's shelters, limiting the availability for children**

to access those shelters and any cuts to the current shelter funding.

3. RFPs

Request for Proposals (RFPs) and subsequent contracts should be funded at an adequate level to provide necessary services and to hire and retain qualified staff. RFPs should provide needed flexibility to contractors. RFPs should share risk between the public and private sector. The Department of Human Services process for creating and implementing RFPs should be legislatively reviewed to determine both their individual and accumulative impact on the child welfare system. A mechanism for public and legislative comments needs to be created prior to the issuance of system changing RFPs.

- ◆ **The Coalition asks the state to develop a mechanism for legislative review, and comments from the public and private agency staff before the creation of system changing RFPs.**

4. Mental Health Redesign

Children who are not Medicaid eligible have very limited access to needed mental health services due to the redesign of child welfare. According to DHS figures from last year, about 1500 children per month are no longer eligible for these services. Abused and neglected children usually have mental health needs. Assuming 1000 of these 1500 children need counseling once a week, the amount needed to provide services would be \$4,320,000.

The design of a mental health system for children should ensure that children who need assistance with mental health can access services, including children in the child welfare system. Children currently receiving mental health services should be able to continue to receive these services from their current provider.

- ◆ **The Coalition asks the state to allow children who are currently receiving services to continue with the service providers currently providing these services.**
- ◆ **The Coalition asks that Iowa provide services for the 1500 children per month no longer eligible for services under the current DHS child welfare criteria.**