

## **HHS and Division Updates for Aging & Disability Services and Behavioral Health Services**

Prepared by Connie B. Fanselow for the  
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### **2024 Iowa Legislative Session Ends**

The 2024 legislative session ended in the early morning hours on April 20. Some of the notable legislative actions relating to health and human services include:

- Modernizing the Health and Human Services Budget
- Expanding adult services to establishing the first children’s mental health system and increasing funding
- Combining Iowa’s 32 mental health and substance use regions into seven unified behavioral health districts to better provide consistent services, coordinate care system wide, and improve outcomes for Iowans
- Passing of a new HHS appropriations bill with significant investments in Medicaid, including community-based services and behavioral health rates, child welfare and agency infrastructure
- Supporting of the Governor’s THRIVE initiative (THRIVE Iowa is a new resource through HHS that will create a network of navigators to help at-risk individuals find immediate support from community organizations, then follow them over time helping them develop an individualized plan for self-sufficiency and long-term independence.)
- Funding the childcare market rate survey increase and extending the childcare assistance pilot
- Fully funding a building expansion at the Office of the State Medical Examiner
- Increasing foster care rates for families by 5%
- Increasing adoption subsidy rates for families by 5%
- Fully funding State Operated Specialty Care at the State Training School, Cherokee and Independence Mental Health Institutes, Woodward Resource Center, and CCUSO (Civil Commitment Unit for Sexual Offenders)
- A \$91 million increase for Medicaid, most of which will go toward HCBS services, including increasing HCBS rates 5% across the board, \$1.4 million targeted to increase residential based supported community living services, \$1.7 million additional funding to address the ID Waiver waiting list, and \$3 million for home health rate increases
- \$1.3 million to the DNR to make state parks more accessible

Here is a list of HHS and related bills passed this session with links to the full bill text:

HF 2673 – Behavioral Health System Alignment Bill, which will re-configure Iowa’s mental health, addiction, and disability services system. A second phase is expected to follow that will provide for Public Health System Alignment - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook HF2673](#)

SF 2251 – 12 Months of Postpartum Medicaid Coverage – this extends postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to 12 months - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook SF2251](#)

HF 2402 – PMIC Bill - provides for funding to bring in a new PMIC (psychiatric medical institution for children) to the state to address children with complex and aggressive behaviors, including sexualized behaviors - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook HF2402](#)

SF 2385 – Boards and Commissions - reviews, creates, reconfigures, and eliminates many of Iowa’s Governor-appointed boards and commissions (this is a long (235 pages) and detailed bill) - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook SF2385](#)

Following are some of the notable changes related to mental health and disability issues:

- Eliminates the Advisory Council on Brain Injury
- Eliminates the Autism Council and creates and Iowa Special Education Council
- Eliminates the Hawki Board
- Eliminates the Advisory Committee for Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Eliminate the Childrens’ Behavioral Health System State Board
- Amends the duties of the Council on Human Services
- Establishes community action agencies
- Establishes a Deaf Services Commission

HF 2698 – HHS Appropriations - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook HF2698](#)

HF 2404 – HHS Omnibus - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook HF2404](#)

SF 2285 – Streamline Legislative Reports - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook SF2285](#)

HF 2658 – Child Care Investments and Pilot Extension - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook HF2658](#)

HF 2605 – Consumable Hemp - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook HF2605](#)

SF 2395 – Opioid Settlement Distribution - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook SF2395](#)

SF 2252 – More Options for Maternal Support - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook SF2252](#)

SF 295 – Updates Iowa’s Guardianship and Conservatorship laws - [Iowa Legislature - BillBook SF295](#)

For more information, the DD Council’s infoNET website at: [infoNET \(iowaddcouncil.org\)](http://infoNET(iowaddcouncil.org)) is a good plain language resource.

### **Infusing Health Equity into Our Work**

Health Equity is the attainment of the highest possible level of health for all people, meaning achieving the environmental, social, economic, and other conditions in which all people have the opportunity to attain their highest possible level of health

- Health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and healthcare disparities

- The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has developed initial policies and plans for embedding health equity across internal and external work through accreditation, workforce development, data management, and planning efforts
- A primary objective over the next few years is to ensure that Iowa HHS has thoroughly examined and addressed opportunities to significantly shift efforts and resources towards eliminating institutional and structural inequities that lead to disproportionately negative outcomes for some populations
- Foundational work includes adoption of this health equity framework and focus areas, and a health equity implementation plan:
  - Organizational Culture
  - Internal Policies and Procedures
  - Data Equity Framework
  - Planning and Performance Improvement
  - Partnerships and Community Engagement

For more information go to: [Health Equity | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

### **HHS Strategic Plan (2024-2027)**

The purpose and goal of this plan is to establish clear focus and direction for the next three years. This plan serves as the framework to deliver on the mission and vision of the newly created Iowa HHS including:

- Setting priorities for new initiatives
- Connecting the HHS teams' work to the strategic priorities
- Reflecting and embedding HHS strategic priorities in all communications
- Guiding HHS day-to-day collaboration and culture

Watch for updates at: [Strategic Planning | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

### **HOME – Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments**

The HOME project aims to improve and ensure that everyone in Iowa has access to high-quality behavioral health, disability, and aging services in their communities by:

- Streamlining screening and enrollment
  - Screening everyone on the HCBS Waiver wait list
  - Improving the screening and enrollment experience
  - Developing improved underlying data and IT architecture to support the experience
- Aligning program design to meet Iowans' needs
  - Integrating Iowans' insights into the new waiver program design
  - Developing uniform services assessment tools
  - Analyzing options for funding waiver redesign
- Improve access to services and support for Iowans
  - Enhancing how people navigate the system
  - Improving case management

Progress Update:

- The current waitlist journey of waiver applicants has been mapped out
- The NOW (Needs on Waitlist) Survey has had over 3000 respondents
- Future waitlist management priorities have been identified
- Iowans have been engaged to provide input to improve waiver design through HOMEtown Conversations
- Work is being done on transitioning from SIS to interRAI assessment tools
- Proposed changes to the waiver structure, eligibility, and service definitions have been developed based on the input received and a waiver redesign concept paper was released on April 18
- MCOs have been engaged in planning for changes to the CBCM ratios and implementing new trainings
- Systems management work is ongoing to update business process flows, financial analysis, and development of measures for waivers and waitlists

More information is available at: [Hope and Opportunity in Many Environments \(HOME\) | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

Click here to read the [Iowa HOME Concept Paper for Home And Community based Services Waiver Redesign](#)

The HOME webpage also includes a “getting involved” link: [Get Involved with HOME | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)

You can email the Mathematica-Harkin team at with any input you have including your thoughts and suggestions on the HCBS changes detailed in the concept paper: [iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:iowahcbs@mathematica-mpr.com)

### **Statewide LTSS Learning Management System**

The learning management system developed by Iowa Medicaid and a contractor, Trualta, LLC, for Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) providers, case managers, direct support professionals and others went live on May 1<sup>st</sup>. There is still work being done to add more trainings and make sure all the functions are working as intended. Over 200 people registered to use the LMS in the first week.

- Providers include home-based programs, rehabilitation services, habilitation services, home health, hospice, Money Follows the Person program, nursing/personal care, care for aging Iowans, and case management.
- The goal of which is to support activities that lead to better health and performance outcomes for providers, direct support professionals and family caregivers and improve the delivery of long-term services and supports.
- The system is open to anyone who wants to use it for online learning related to providing long-term services and supports to individuals with disabilities.

For more information, go to the HHS website at: [Learning Management System \(LMS\) | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

### **Your Life Iowa Released its Annual Report for FY23**

#### Report Highlights:

- SFY 2023 marked the sixth year since the launch of the Your Life Iowa project. Over that time, YLI received just under 150,000 contacts via phone, text, chat, and email; and over 1.9 million visits to yourlifeiowa.org.

#### Key accomplishments during SFY 2023 included:

- Answered 47,072 contacts via phone, text, chat and email to Your Life Iowa (includes 1- 800-BETS OFF calls) resulting in 28,852 direct and indirect referrals. The number of contacts increased by approximately 15 percent over SFY 2022.
- Served 541,130 users of YourLifelowa.org, an increase of 76.5 percent compared to SFY 2022. This resulted in 645,101 sessions (up 77.2 percent over SFY 2022) and 847,716 pageviews (up 56.4 percent over SFY 2022). • Thirteen (13) media campaigns increased awareness of Your Life Iowa by targeting messaging for adult and children's mental health, suicide prevention, gambling, and substance use (alcohol, opioids, fentanyl) and stigma reduction.
- Expanded and updated website (yourlifeiowa.org) with improved quiz functionality, updates to the calendar, and enhancements to the facility locator

You can access Your Life Iowa at: [Homepage | Your Life Iowa](#)

### **Service System Alignment**

As discussed in previous updates, HHS has contracted with Health Management Associates (HMA) to study the delivery of health and human service programs in our state. We now have new legislation that will impact how the alignment moves forward.

The full Behavioral Health System Alignment Report (February 2024) is available at: [Service Alignment Assessment Recommendations Summary \(iowa.gov\)](#)

You can find more information and future updates at: [HHS System Alignment | Health & Human Services \(iowa.gov\)](#)

**Iowa Medicaid Dashboard is available at:**  
<https://hhs.iowa.gov/iowa-Medicaid-dashboard>

## Iowa Medicaid Town Halls

- Iowa Medicaid monthly virtual town hall meetings continue
- The Medicaid staff want the provider and member town halls to be helpful and informative, so they are seeking input. Below is a link to an online survey to let them know what you would like they to focus on in 2024: <https://forms.office.com/g/I4hZsZkr7s>
- A separate town hall meeting is held for providers and members on the fourth Thursday of each month – the following dates have been posted:
  - **Provider Town Hall – Thursday, May 16, 2024 from 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.**
  - **Member Town Hall – Thursday, May 16, 2024 from 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.**
  - **CCO Town Hall – Monday, May 20, 2024 from 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.**
- Email specific questions to: [IMETownHall@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:IMETownHall@dhs.state.ia.us)
- Access more information and register at: [Iowa Medicaid Town Halls | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)
- Members who need assistance with registration, may contact Iowa Medicaid Member Services at 1-800-338-8366

## Iowa Medicaid Town Hall Archive

To view recordings and materials from past town hall meetings and other public events such as listening sessions, go to: [Iowa Medicaid Virtual Meeting Archive | Iowa Department of Health and Human Services](#)