What does opportunity look like for Iowa children and how can we as a state make sure they are getting what they need to thrive? Here are specific policy that promote opportunity. Learn more at www.cfpciowa.org.

**Early Childhood**

**Opportunity is local decision-making for young children.**

**The need**
Iowa has a robust cross-sector system in Early Childhood Iowa, but local ECI boards have seen significant budget cuts over the last 10 years, even as they have continued to serve more children.

**The policy**
Restore funding for Early Childhood Iowa to 2008 level with an $18 million funding increase.

**The vision**
A strong ECI is uniquely positioned to improve services and fill gaps in services in the areas of health, early learning, family support and special needs to meet the needs of young children and their parents.

**Child health**

**Opportunity is early intervention when development goes off track.**

**The need**
1 in 5 Iowa children are at risk of social, emotional or developmental delay, but only half of delays are detected prior to kindergarten, when interventions are most effective.

**The policy**
Expand the 1st Five Healthy Mental Development Initiative to the remaining 11 counties currently unserved by the Iowa Department of Public Health program.

**The vision**
The first five years is a critical window of opportunity to help kids build strong futures. Regular screenings help identify concerns early and get kids connected to interventions to reduce the severity and scope of developmental delays and reduce family stress.

**Opportunity is access to health care.**

**The need**
About 24,000 Iowa kids were uninsured in 2017. That marked the end of an eight-year trend of declines in the share of children who are uninsured.

**The policy**
Make a newborn’s CHIP coverage effective on their birth date, regardless of when in the first 90 days of life they enroll.

**The policy**
Extend the Medicaid/CHIP continuous eligibility period for up to five years for children under age 6.

**The opportunity**
Health coverage is the key that opens the door to the health-care system. Insured children are much more likely to get timely medical care, including well-child care, that contributes to good health.
Opportunity is quality health care.

**The need**

Although comprising over half of all Iowans covered by Medicaid, children have not received sufficient attention within Iowa’s program. Iowa is falling well below the national average on several child health outcomes, including immunizations.

**The policy**

*Extend Medicaid's Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) health benefit to children covered in Iowa's separate CHIP program (hawk-i).*

**Create a Pediatric Advisory Board** to recommend to Iowa Medicaid Enterprise and managed care organizations (and report to the legislature) strategies to improve child health outcomes.

**The vision**

Improving how Medicaid delivers care represents a tremendous opportunity to move the needle on the health outcomes of Iowa children. EPSDT in particular is designed to meet children's unique health needs and should be the standard of care for all children.

Opportunity is access to mental and behavioral health services.

**The need**

Iowa currently has a patchwork of mental-health services that is putting our children's mental health and well-being at risk.

**The policy**

*Implement and fund the Children's Mental Health System State Board recommendations for a statewide children's behavioral health system.*

**The vision**

A fully funded children's mental health system will allow families to know where to turn for help and allow Iowans to access the same array of core services regardless of where they live.

Pre-K-12

Opportunity is schools adequately funded to prepare students for the future.

**The need**

Iowa public schools have been underfunded for years, to the detriment of the vast majority of children, whose futures depend on a quality public education.

**The policies**

*Increase the school supplemental state aid (SSA) formula by at least 3 percent and increase weighted funding for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for children at or below 200% of poverty.*

*Reject “education savings grants” or similar schemes that would weaken funding for public schools.*

**Renew the SAVE sales tax penny for school infrastructure** to permit districts to bond against those revenues.

**The vision**

A high-quality education, starting even before kindergarten, offers Iowa children a leg up—a boost for them and the communities they live in.
**Child welfare**

**Opportunity is permanent, caring adult relationships.**

**The need**
Over 40 percent of Iowa youth “aging out” of foster care at 18 do so without permanent connections to adults, which increases their risk for homelessness, poverty and unemployment.

**Fund a subsidized guardianship program** to support relatives assuming permanent legal responsibility where adoption or return to parents is not feasible.

**The vision**
Iowa gets another tool that youth living in foster care can access to move out of foster care and maintain relationships with caring adults in their lives.

**Opportunity is being part of a family.**

**The need**
Iowa places children into foster care at a higher rate than U.S. average, and African American, Native American and Hispanic children at rates that greatly exceed their white peers. In addition, too many children are placed in group settings, when all evidence suggests children in care do best in less restrictive, family-like settings.

**Implement provisions of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).**

**The vision**
Iowa reduces the number of children in foster care by expanding prevention activities and ensures children in care are placed in the most family-like situation possible and returned to family as soon as they can.

**Opportunity is giving child welfare workers the tools they need.**

**The need**
DHS child welfare workers currently rely on a cumbersome, 20-year-old computer system to track information on families.

**Support design and implementation of a new DHS computer system** with a one-time $15 million state investment (to be matched by federal funds).

**The vision**
DHS workers are better equipped to collect and share data in real time on the children and families they serve — and provide effective, comprehensive services to families.

**Race equity**

**Opportunity is for every Iowa kid.**

**The need**
A large body of data and research has demonstrated the wide gulf in prosperity limiting the prospects of children of color in Iowa.

**Increase collection and reporting of enrollment and outcome data by race and ethnicity** within state agencies and contracting agencies.

**The vision**
By tracking data by race and ethnicity, we make sure we are offering every kid a path to opportunity — essential for our state’s shared prosperity.
Family economic success

Opportunity is helping parents get ahead.

The need
Iowa has one of the lowest income eligibility cut offs for child care assistance in the U.S. That means working families face a large “cliff effect” that sets back their efforts to get ahead.

The policy
Increase the child care assistance family eligibility level to 185 percent of the federal poverty level, expanding tiered co-pays.

The vision
Low-income parents who want and need to work will be able to afford quality child care and not worry about accepting a raise or a taking higher-paying job.

Opportunity is a stable, reliable workforce.

The need
The number of licensed and registered child care providers in Iowa dropped 42 percent between 2013 and 2018, per Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral. Large portions of the state are considered “child care deserts,” areas with significant undersupply of slots.

The policy
Establish a public/private partnership to address local child care needs with $1 million in matching funds to Early Childhood Iowa.

The vision
More Iowa child care providers accept child care assistance, and families have a choice of child care providers. Families have more options for before- and afterschool care, care during non-traditional hours and on-site care.

Opportunity is the ability to meet basic needs.

The need
We have powerful tools in our tax system that reward work and help parents meet their families’ basic needs, but they fall short of meeting the full need.

The policy
Increase the state earned income and child tax credits (EITC to 20 percent of the federal EITC, up from 15 percent, and the child tax credit to $100, up from $40).

The vision
Parents have the ability to contribute to their families’ economic well-beings — and meet their children’s basic needs, reducing the stress and deprivation that hinders readiness for school and life.

Taxes and budget

Opportunity is fair tax treatment.

The need
Overall Iowa is an average tax state, but middle- and low-income Iowa families pay a higher share of their income in state and local taxes (income, property, sales and excise) than wealthy families. “Upside-down” tax systems like Iowa’s promote inequality and limit investment in priorities that support the prospects of low- and middle-income Iowans.

The policy
Enact tax policies that decrease income inequality and fund an adequate budget meeting the needs of all Iowans.

The vision
Iowa’s tax system and budget not only address immediate needs, but embrace stewardship for the future by investing in the education, health and safety of our residents — investments that yield long-term returns for all Iowans.