



2020 legislative agenda

What does opportunity look like for Iowa children? How can we as a state make sure kids and their families are getting what they need to thrive? Here are specific proposals that promote opportunity.

Learn more at www.cfpciowa.org

Child care

Opportunity is helping parents enter and advance in the workforce.

Contact **Sheila Hansen** at shansen@cfpciowa.org

Increase the child care assistance (CCA) family eligibility level to 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

Working parents are stretched and need support so they can go to work or school while their children attend quality child care. Iowa is taking welcomed steps to allow CCA families whose income rises above the current, and low, 145% FPL cutoff to stay on up to the federal cap (the much higher 85% of state median income). But that leaves out families who apply when their incomes are already even slightly above 145% FPL, meaning the state will treat two otherwise similar families differently solely based on when they applied. A 185% FPL threshold will reduce this gap and help more families get ahead.

Increase provider pay by raising CCA reimbursement for all providers to the federal standard, 75th percentile of current market rate, and investing in WAGE\$ and TEACH.

By compensating providers at a rate that reflects the cost of quality care, more will participate, opening up more slots, offering families choice of providers and helping providers themselves earn a living wage and advance in the field. Now is time to act: the number of licensed and registered child care providers in Iowa dropped 42% between 2013 and 2018, and large portions of the state are “child care deserts.”

Enact child care strategies like tax credits and public/private partnerships on top of—not in place of—improving our child care assistance program.

Proposals to offer tax credits and matching funds for local innovative efforts can improve child care access and affordability. But they are a supplement, not a replacement, for a strong CCA program. CCA is the backbone of our state’s child care system and the first, best way to assure that the families who struggle the most to afford care can do so, no matter where they live.

Racial equity

Opportunity is breaking down barriers holding back children of color.

Contact **Sheila Hansen** at shansen@cfpciowa.org

Direct LSA to conduct racial impact analysis of proposed legislation as part of each fiscal note.

For Iowa to prosper, we will need everyone’s skills and talents. Structural barriers have limited the prospects of families of color in Iowa for generations and do so today. By assessing the impacts of policy by race and ethnicity, we hold ourselves accountable for dismantling barriers and making sure we offer every kid the path to opportunity.

Children’s mental health

Opportunity is access to mental and behavioral health services.

Contact **Mary Nelle Trefz** at mnt@cfpciowa.org

Fund and build out the Children’s Mental Health System lawmakers established in 2019.

Iowa needs adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for our mental health system. Policymakers should pursue opportunities to leverage the unique funding streams for children’s mental health and invest additional resources to fix our patchwork of services, particularly services that support children’s healthy social, emotional and cognitive development (including the 1st Five Healthy Mental Development Initiative).

Safety net

Opportunity is concrete support in times of need.

Contact **Mary Nelle Trefz** at mnt@cfpciowa.org

Reject barriers that take food, health care and basic support away from Iowans, including work reporting requirements and ongoing, repeated eligibility verification checks.

We know from experiences of other states that work reporting and verification requirements in SNAP, TANF and Medicaid do not actually promote work. Instead they put up administrative hurdles and increase bureaucratic red tape, making it harder for Iowans to stay healthy, put food on the table and support their families—all while exposing the state to inevitable, expensive legal challenges.

Maternal health

Opportunity is having a healthy mom.

Contact **Mary Nelle Trefz** at
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Expand existing evidence-based home visiting programs to include prenatal support for pregnant women and new parents.

Nearly 70% of Iowa mothers report experiencing two or more stressors in the year before giving birth. These stressors have been linked to low birth weight and shorter gestational age. Home visiting equips parents with the tools they need to create a safe and stable home and nurture their kids. Starting visits before birth helps improve outcomes for children.

Early childhood

Opportunity is local decision-making for young children.

Contact **Sheila Hansen** at
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Restore funding for Early Childhood Iowa to 2008 level with a \$17.5 million funding increase.

Even after a modest boost last year, local ECI boards have yet to make up for significant budget cuts over the previous 10 years. A strong ECI is uniquely positioned to meet local needs for health, early learning, family support and disability services for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

PreK-12

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

Contact **Sheila Hansen** at
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Increase the supplemental school aid (SSA) formula by at least 3% and provide weighted funding for Statewide Voluntary Preschool students below 200% of poverty.

A high-quality education, starting before kindergarten, offers Iowa children a leg up—a boost for them and their communities. 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.

Reject “education savings grants” or similar schemes.

There’s no place in our state for schemes that divert state funds from local school districts to private schools, weakening the public system that most Iowans will continue to rely on. It makes even less sense in rural areas where families have few or no private options available.

Child welfare

Opportunity is being part of a family.

Contact **Angelica Cardenas** at
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Implement the Family First Prevention Services Act.

Iowa should take steps to implement all areas of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act. The 2018 act aims to reduce the number of children entering foster care by expanding prevention services, ensure children in care are placed in family-like settings and better support youth exiting the foster care system as they transition to adulthood.

Taxes and budget

Opportunity is fair tax treatment.

Contact **Sheila Hansen** at
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Enact tax policies that **decrease income inequality** and **fund a budget** meeting the needs of all Iowans.

Iowa’s budget should address immediate needs *and* embrace stewardship for the future. We must turn around our “upside-down” tax system—in which middle- and low-income families pay a higher share of their income in state and local taxes than wealthy families—that limits investment in education, health and safety.